

ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion (1971-1999)

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By

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## **Abstract**

Between 1971 and 1999, ParticipACTION, Canada's Health Promotion agency, reached into Canadian homes, schools, and places of work to "educate, motivate, and mobilize" the public about the perceived need to become physically fit. This dissertation discusses how the agency employed a variety of professional marketing approaches to create compelling prescriptive literature concerning physical fitness to advance a nation-building agenda based in the state directive of individual accountability for the Canadian body. As a result of ParticipACTION's sustained and pervasive influence, Canadians not only remember this prolific brand, but its underlying messaging has become a part of how Canadians view physical fitness and citizenship. ParticipACTION was a project of healthism fostered in an environment of ambient fear. The threat of the Cold War, the constructed menace of the Obesity Crisis, and the fear of Quebec Separatism were all used to bolster the message at this semi-public agency over its thirty years of national social marketing. How individual Canadians experienced ParticipACTION varied significantly based on their body type, socio-economic status, gender, language, ethnicity, and region. Through the use of Historical GIS mapping, oral interviews, and archival records, this dissertation offers a history from creation to closure of this national agency and its place in Canada's social history.

## Acknowledgements

This completed dissertation is the cumulative result of years of effort and love on the part of so many that I hold dear.

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And lastly to my husband, Doug Drover. Behind almost every successful academic is a long-suffering and extremely tired spouse. You kept a roof over my head during this long caper; you proofread every page, acted as a sounding board for every theory, and never questioned whether this was all worth it. Much like the three children we've had along the way, this is our accomplishment. Thank you.

## **Dedication**

To Dr. Bill Godfrey, a teacher, scholar, historian, and friend like no other.  
I did it, Dr. Godfrey. Thank you for believing in me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Origin Story, The Cold War and State Funding of Fitness.....	48
3. PARTICIPACTION Saskatoon: A Case Study in convergent memories.....	75
4. Regional Variation in Social Memory.....	113
5. Civic Advocacy, Binary Logic, and Creating the New Enemy.....	135
6. ParticipACTION's Funding Model, Corporate Ethics, and Social Memory....	159
7. ParticipACTION: A Federal Trojan Horse in Quebec.....	195
8. Conclusion.....	218
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	227
APPENDIX 1.....	241

ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

An Introduction

Our mandate at ParticipACTION is to promote increased physical activity and improved fitness among Canadians. Our practical objective is to move people to take positive personal action. Everything we do works on two levels: the personal and the national. Implicit in our mandate and in our practical aims is the idea, not just of getting individuals fit, but of building a fit nation.<sup>1</sup>

For nearly thirty years, ParticipACTION was a constant in Canada's popular culture, with a brand that was well established and widely understood by Canadians. Between 1971 and 1999, ParticipACTION (Sport Participation Canada), a health promotion agency funded by the Canadian federal government and private sponsors, created promotional advertising that reached into Canadian schools, workplaces, and homes through television, print, radio, and billboard campaigns.<sup>2</sup> This not-for-profit agency's stated objective was to increase public awareness of the need for daily physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. In addition to regionally developed local initiatives, ParticipACTION also launched a series of national advertising campaigns that saturated the Canadian media market with its physical fitness message. A 1992 study showed that 89% of Canadians could identify ParticipACTION by name or by its iconic pinwheel logo.<sup>3</sup> To put the magnitude of this proportion in perspective, current social marketing experts aim for a brand recognition rate of 70% during a running campaign, and a rating above this amount is perceived as unattainable.<sup>4</sup> According to the three national awareness and impact surveys conducted for ParticipACTION over its nearly three decades of operation, ParticipACTION

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<sup>1</sup> "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10 Anniversary Report, 1971–1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 6. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>2</sup> Health Promotion as a health philosophy takes place where people "live, love, work, and play." Michel O'Neill et al. *Health Promotion in Canada*, 2nd Edition, (Canadian Scholars Press Inc. 2007), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Gallup National Omnibus, *Awareness and Perception of PARTICIPATION by CANADIANS*, June 1992 : 25. University of Saskatchewan Archives, ParticipACTION Archives MG 291 2004-41(9).

<sup>4</sup> Caville N, Bauman A. "Changing social norms to promote health-enhancing physical activity: Do mass media campaigns have a role?", *Journal of Sports Science* 2004, Aug. 22(8):774.

consistently remained above this recognition threshold and thus became a nationally recognized authority on physical fitness and healthy living. Charting how this national authority was achieved, and to what end, is the central purpose of this dissertation. Whether or not ParticipACTION should be considered a success has been widely debated among physical fitness experts since shortly after ParticipACTION's founding in 1971. This dissertation argues that ParticipACTION was a highly successful organization but that the success it achieved cannot be measured in pounds lost or kilometers ran. ParticipACTION's success was as a persuasive organization that fostered a perceptual shift in what it meant to be physically fit and how that status is critical to finding one's place as a citizen of Canada. As longtime ParticipACTION President Russ Kisby stated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report for the organization:

We [ParticipACTION] didn't invent the fitness idea, not by a long shot, but we have tried to re-invent it for Canadians, and get it to them. We've rallied support for the idea, and helped it take hold. We've worked, if you will, to move the idea so that the idea could move people. That's been our contribution to the national fitness effort.<sup>5</sup>

While this dissertation defines and outlines ParticipACTION's successes, these explorations should not be misconstrued as support for ParticipACTION's underlying mission or mandate. ParticipACTION was able to position itself as a national authority and maintain this status for nearly three decades despite limited resources and ever-shifting political support. This is a notable accomplishment for any not-for-profit organization, regardless of the ethics of its intentions.

### Terminology

'Physical fitness', 'physical activity', and a 'healthy lifestyle' were terms often employed by ParticipACTION's administration but rarely clarified. For the purposes of this study, physical

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<sup>5</sup> Russ Kisby, "Ideas Move People – An Introduction", *PARTICIPACTION's 10 Anniversary Report, 1971–1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 5. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.



fitness is defined as being regularly engaged in physical activities that result in the conditioning of one's physical body to fall within socially determined parameters of acceptable weight, agility, and ability. Physical activity is defined as any exertion of the body that elevates the heart rate, burns calories, and aids in the conditioning of the body towards the achievement of acceptable weight, agility and ability. The third term of concern is a healthy lifestyle. While physical activity and physical fitness relate directly to an action, a healthy lifestyle can be considered a holistic term to encompass eating habits, physical activity, and the eschewing of deviant and harmful behaviour such as smoking or heavy drinking that might comprise the physical body. The history of ParticipACTION is a history of a physical fitness organization that fostered the adherence to their own prescriptive brand of healthy lifestyle, as such, these terms will arise throughout and should not be considered interchangeable.

#### Historiographical Review: ParticipACTION Analyzed

This dissertation builds on an existing body of research that has analyzed the value of ParticipACTION as a health promotion, social marketing, or health communication organization.<sup>6</sup> Whether from the fields of public health research, marketing, or kinesiology, the existing studies have all been predicated on the belief that ParticipACTION's underlying mission of promoting physical fitness was a positive development for the health of the nation and its people. This dissertation's objective is to critically examine this assumption. ParticipACTION's prescriptive literature always served a political nation-building agenda, its agents held

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<sup>6</sup> Social Marketing is the application of generic marketing to a specific class of problems where the object of the marketer is to change social behaviour primarily to benefit the target audience and the general society. Health communication creates awareness and informs populations about an issue, to stimulate discussion and to create social norms around health issues as defined by Adrian Bauman, Judith Madill, Cora Lynn Craig, Art Salmon, "ParticipACTION: This Mouse Roared, But Did It Get the Cheese?", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S14.

tremendous power as institutional gatekeepers, and many Canadians were not, in fact, well served by this messaging.

The secondary literature concerning ParticipACTION can be separated into three distinct categories: localized case studies concerning health care delivery, post-mortem analyses of strategic effectiveness, and cultural content analyses of programming.

#### The local as bellwether of the national

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, several authors conducted quantitative and qualitative research into ParticipACTION's ability to increase physical fitness rates.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, with no national survey of Canada's physical fitness, ParticipACTION and its researchers lacked baseline data on which to build or refute the program's efficacy. For this reason, as well as because of the sheer scope and expense of a national survey, most academic works that addressed ParticipACTION's effectiveness employed a case study model focusing on a particular community, region, or aspect of ParticipACTION's development. Written in 1975, Richard Baka's M.A. thesis in Physical Education, entitled *PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada*, examined the fledgling organization as an innovating mechanism for health information delivery. Baka analyzed the reasons for ParticipACTION's creation, the efficiency of its corporate structure, and its potential role in a national health care delivery strategy. The majority of Baka's research was drawn from current government policies and oral interviews with ParticipACTION employees, including Vice President Russ Kisby, who was given "special mention" for the "numerous sessions and time he devoted."<sup>8</sup> Baka was enthusiastically optimistic about ParticipACTION's future and the growing

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<sup>7</sup> Physical Fitness rates can be measured by amount of physical activity, weight, cardiovascular strength etc. Each secondary source defined the parameters of fitness and a fitness rate based on their personal preference.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Baka, *PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada*, (M.A. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1975), 1.

need for its services in Canadian society. Citing a study conducted by John J. Jackson of Saskatoon in 1973 involving 1230 adults, Baka stated:

The results strongly imply that Canadian men and women as a group are physically unfit in terms of cardiorespiratory fitness levels. They are not only inferior in this regard to Scandanavian [sic] norms, but also to the American Heart Association's cardiorespiratory fitness classification.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with this evidence, which Baka framed as irrefutable, he claimed ParticipACTION was the solution to a national crisis in physical fitness. His conclusions included three logistical recommendations for the agency. First, it should change its official name from Sports Participation Canada to the publically advertised ParticipACTION in order to sever any perceived link to the federal government. Second, the agency must continue to expand in order to meet its stated national objectives. Third, regional branch offices should be established to create regionally relevant cultural content. As a researcher, Baka had the enviable opportunity to speak with many of ParticipACTION's founders during those heady days when ParticipACTION's potential as a health promotion organization seemed boundless. In speaking with Baka nearly thirty years after the submission of his M.A. thesis, his interview revealed that this sense of optimism for the ParticipACTION model remains and that he believes ParticipACTION's template should be emulated both in Canada and internationally in the current "fight against obesity"<sup>10</sup>. After completing his graduate studies, Baka continued his research in health and sporting organizations and currently holds the position of Senior Lecturer in the College of Sport & Exercise Science at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. His areas of expertise include Olympic Studies, Personal Training, and Australian Sport and Fitness Delivery Systems.<sup>11</sup> His

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<sup>9</sup> Baka, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Richard Baka, October 17, 2014 4:00 p.m. CST (Central Standard Time) for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Richard Baka, Victoria University, Melbourne Australian, <https://www.vu.edu.au/contact-us/richard-baka> (Accessed March 22, 2016)

current support of the ParticipACTION model aligns with the theorizing of his contemporaries in the Australian academic field of sports and exercise science. While Baka's M.A. study claimed to be a national critique of ParticipACTION, his research subjects and sources remained localized to central Canada with the bulk of his oral interviews taking place in ParticipACTION's Toronto office. His findings speak to the corporate structure of ParticipACTION and offer a glimpse of those individuals who made ParticipACTION one of the most recognizable brands in 20<sup>th</sup> century Canada. It offers little in the way of theoretical or ethical examination regarding ParticipACTION and begins with the assumption that ParticipACTION's social marketing is an important tool in the government project of making a healthier nation.

Kathy Ann Somerville submitted a similarly concentrated local study of ParticipACTION at the University of Saskatchewan in 1983 as the major component of her Master of Science in Physical Education. Funded by ParticipACTION and Sask Sport, Somerville's study was a quantitative analysis of physical fitness rates in Saskatoon as compared to the Canadian national average for the "winter months of 1981-82" using a random sample of 2000 Canadians and 400 Saskatonians.<sup>12</sup> The background of this study is exceptionally important to ParticipACTION's strategic development. In 1972, Saskatoon was selected as ParticipACTION's first demonstration community. For the following decade, Saskatoon's media, municipal government officials, and volunteer workforce lobbied the local population to make significant changes to their lifestyle and physical fitness. Prominent University of Saskatchewan academics Dr. Howard Nixon and Dr. Don Bailey lent their authority to this cause as key board members and active volunteers. Nixon and Bailey also sat as members of Somerville's research committee and

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<sup>12</sup> K.A. Somerville, *ParticipACTION Saskatoon: A Local Promotional Campaign for Physical Activity and Fitness*, (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 1983).

believed that Somerville's study would validate their decade-long efforts. In a 1983 presentation to the Toronto-based Contemporary Research Centre, Bailey and Nixon speculated "Saskatoon residents might score higher than other Canadians on physical activity awareness and behaviour because of the city's 'super exposure' to PARTICIPaction over more than a decade."<sup>13</sup> With this hypothesis squarely in mind, Somerville's study was undertaken to determine whether or not this concentration of prescriptive programming had a statistically significant effect on the physical fitness of her test group. Unfortunately for her financial backers, Somerville's findings demonstrated that Saskatonians did not participate in more physical activities than did the Canadian average and despite a decade of pressure and programming, the local sample's health remained on par with the national average. As Chapter 3 will discuss, the findings of Somerville's study had significant repercussions on ParticipACTION's continued development after 1983 and in how the Saskatoon Community Pilot Project was framed during ParticipACTION's memorialization.

Graduating from the Department of Physical Education at the University of Alberta in 1975, John J. Jackson's dissertation, entitled *Diffusion of an Innovation: An Exploratory Study of the Consequences of Sport Participation Canada's Campaign at Saskatoon 1971-1974*, employed a random sampling of 400 interview-questionnaires and unstructured interviews to gauge whether the people of Saskatoon were indeed affected by PARTICIPaction's concentrated programming. Jackson reported:

About 94 percent of the Saskatoon population were [sic] aware of Sport Participation Canada's campaign and 16 percent adopted regular recreative [sic] physical activity, as a consequence, to complement the 25 percent of prior

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<sup>13</sup> D. A. Bailey & H.R. Nixon, *A study of fitness importance, physical activity patterns, and awareness of Saskatoon citizens compared to baseline Canadian data*, (University of Saskatchewan, College of Education, 1983).

adopters. Most new adopters adopted for health reasons and very few did so for social reasons.<sup>14</sup>

Using the Saskatoon case study, Jackson effectively separated ParticipACTION's unexpected strengths from its obvious and disappointing weaknesses. ParticipACTION was exceptionally effective at brand recognition but did little to affect physical behaviour in its prescriptive targets. In his dissertation and a number of articles published in notable journals – *Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Journal* (1976), *Sports and International Relations* (1979), *Review of Sport and Leisure* (1979), *British Journal of Physical Education* (1990), *Recreation Canada* (1975-1991) – Jackson used quantitative data from Saskatoon, SK, and a similar Oak Bay, BC, case study to support his claims.<sup>15</sup>

Jackson was not cited in the Somerville thesis and after the completion of her Master's research Somerville moved on to federally funded research in off-season cycling training.<sup>16</sup> Jackson, for his part, became Associate Vice-President of Research at the University of Victoria and the vast majority of his published work focused on the inability of ParticipACTION to move beyond idea to action. Throughout the 1990s, Jackson's articles took on a noticeable political bent. No longer satisfied with emphasizing ParticipACTION's lack of behavioural impact, Jackson began to question the continued funding of the agency. In a 1991 article for *Recreation*

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<sup>14</sup> John J. Jackson, *Diffusion of an Innovation: An Exploratory Study of the Consequences of Sport Participation Canada's Campaign at Saskatoon 1971-1974*, (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1975) ix.

<sup>15</sup> John J. Jackson, "Communication and "sports for all" in historical perspective", *International Journal of Physical Education*, 31:2, 29-33, (1994). – "Mass participation in physical recreation: A 15-year study in Saskatoon", *Recreation Canada*, 49:3, 33-38 (1991). – "An assessment of exercising Behavior in Saskatoon", *British Journal of Physical Education Resource Supplement*, 8, 21, 4, 19-24, (1990). – "Some consequences of PARTICIPaction's campaign in Victoria", *Review of Sport and Leisure*, 4, 2, 89-100, (1979). – "Sport for all", Lowe, B., Kanin, D.B., and Strenk, A. eds. *Sport and International Relations*, Campaign, IL: Stipes, 486-504, (1978). – "Some consequences of PARTICIPaction's campaign at Saskatoon", *Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation Journal*, 42, 25-31, (1976). – "Getting people involved in activity", *Recreation Canada*, 33:5, 51-53 (1975).

<sup>16</sup> H.A. Quinney, K. Somerville, S.R. Petersen, "Low and high velocity off-season resistance training for cycling", *Sport Canada Applied Sport Research Program*, (1984).

Canada, Jackson cited ParticipACTION's 1987 \$1.47 million<sup>17</sup> operating grant and suggested that this was an exceptionally high number to justify when all that he saw produced over ParticipACTION's tenure was an ideological shift in perceptions of health ideals with very little tangible behavioural change.<sup>18</sup> He concluded by stating, "this paper's findings suggest that the Government of Canada should consider whether or not its financial involvement should continue."<sup>19</sup> This article coincided with the beginning of ParticipACTION's financial and programming decline in the 1990s. It is unclear whether Jackson's article contributed to the agency's loss of favour within Health Canada, but much can be gleaned from Jackson's research. In his fifteen-year evaluation of program buy-in, Jackson discovered that Saskatoon residents now believed they must partake in regular physical activity and eat a healthy diet in order to be physically fit. The case-study population had consumed the prescriptive messaging, but they chose not to act on this information, and this contradiction addresses the unspoken resistance many Canadians presented when confronted with ParticipACTION's messaging. Jackson failed to recognize such agency on the part of his subjects because he, like the majority of ParticipACTION researchers, believed in the underlying objectives of ParticipACTION's program and explained any lagging adoption as a symptom of population lethargy or willful ignorance.

Despite Jackson's criticisms of ParticipACTION's effectiveness, it is clear that he supported the organization's underlying objective of population-wide behaviour modification to achieve an arguably more physically fit nation.<sup>20</sup> The language surrounding ParticipACTION's

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<sup>17</sup> John J. Jackson, "Mass Participation in Physical Recreation: A fifteen-year study in Saskatoon", *Recreation Canada*, 49:3, 35, (1991).

<sup>18</sup> In this context, behavioural change is defined as a marked increase in an individual's physical activity or movement toward a health lifestyle which aligns with ParticipACTION's underlying philosophy.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson, (1991), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Behavioural modification is defined as a sustained and pervasive change in the behavioural patterns of Canadians resulting in the establishment of a new societal norm.

objective in Jackson's work remains distinctly positive with ParticipACTION's mission described as an "innovation" and "an important development" in the field of health promotion.<sup>21</sup> While this dissertation agrees with Jackson's separation of brand success and programming failure, it does not share the underlying positivist interpretation of ParticipACTION's mission for Canadians, nor does it simply discount the agency of Canadians in resisting this programming.

The final localized case study to evaluate ParticipACTION was yet another Master's thesis, this time written by Alan McFarlane as part of his Master of Human Kinetics degree. Written in 1994, McFarlane's study offers a comparative analysis of ParticipACTION and a provincial body, Fitness Ontario, in the effectiveness of their health promotion delivery. As will be outlined in Chapter 6, ParticipACTION's federal operating grant had been significantly curtailed in the 1990s, and the scope of programming constricted accordingly. Ontario and Quebec became the sites of ParticipACTION's 'last stand', but despite a concentration of programming in this politically visible region, McFarlane concluded that Fitness Ontario was better equipped to meet the health promotion mandate of both organizations. As a provincial body with direct links to the Ontario Ministry of Health and locally developed infrastructure, Fitness Ontario had regional influence that ParticipACTION simply could not match.

McFarlane, Baka, Somerville, and Jackson all wrote dissertations or theses addressing an aspect of ParticipACTION. Of this group, only Baka's conclusions painted ParticipACTION in a positive light. He applauded the public-private matching formulary that funded the agency and suggested that ParticipACTION's particular brand of non-confrontational persuasive programming should be copied by all western democracies. Juxtaposing Baka's interview-based qualitative methodology against the quantitative offerings of McFarlane, Somerville, and Jackson may work to explain the vastly different results of Baka's study. McFarlane, Somerville,

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<sup>21</sup> Jackson, (1975) ix.



and Jackson were comparing raw numbers taken from the populations who were subject to ParticipACTION's messaging. Baka was not concerned with those who were being persuaded but those who were in the business of persuasion. Interviewing such charismatic individuals as past and future ParticipACTION Presidents Keith McKerracher, Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, and Russ Kisby, even the most impartial academic might be persuaded by their collective charms. Baka's top-down study of those who believed in ParticipACTION and its mission failed to take into consideration whether or not Canadians were truly buying what ParticipACTION was so convincingly selling. Despite this methodological difference, all four authors agreed that ParticipACTION's major strength was as a persuasive unit fostering belief in the idea of physical fitness and generating brand recognition and support.

#### Post-mortem analyses of strategic effectiveness

The 1990s had proven a fruitful time for the development of public health advocacy in Canada. RADIX (Promotion de la Sante), est. 1992; ALCOA (Active Living Coalition for Older Adults), est. 1993; CAHPRD (Canadian Association of Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance), renamed and expanded in 1994; the CHN (Canadian Health Network), est. 1999; and OHPE (Ontario Health Promotion E-Bulletin), est. 1999, were new and innovative organizations lobbying for government support to promote health and physical activity in Canada. All of these organizations did their own public advocacy and did not depend on ParticipACTION to promote the cause. ParticipACTION was no longer the only national health promotion agency, and its utility was increasingly being questioned by federal government bureaucrats responsible for the allocation of the limited resources available. As a result, ParticipACTION officially closed its doors in 2000. During the previous decade, Health Canada had incrementally decreased its contribution to ParticipACTION's continued operations from

\$1 million (1989-1990) to \$540 000 (1999-2000).<sup>22</sup> In the fall of 1999, the Board of Directors under the recommendation of President Russ Kisby “drew a line in the sand,” demanding a basic level of \$1 million per annum from Jean Chretien’s Liberal government to keep the organization afloat.<sup>23</sup> This request was flatly rejected by Deputy Minister of Health David Dodge and the Board discontinued operations.<sup>24</sup> For Kisby, the Board, and ParticipACTION’s supporters, this was not the desired outcome of this standoff. Almost immediately, Kisby began the search for other sources of funding to bring back the now defunct ParticipACTION. In 2007, these efforts came to fruition with the creation of The *New* ParticipACTION, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada with matching funding from large private sponsors such as longtime Olympics financial backer Coca-Cola Canada.<sup>25</sup> In the interim, a group of academics and industry experts penned a supplement to the Canadian Journal of Public Health (CJPH) dedicated to analyzing the original ParticipACTION.<sup>26</sup> This forty-five page supplement, glossy, bound, and in colour, celebrated ParticipACTION’s strengths and successes. Although the campaign to bring back the agency was never overtly mentioned, the political intent of this document is clearly understood in the subtext.<sup>27</sup> Entitled *The Mouse That Roared: A Marketing and Health Communications Success Story*, the overarching theme played on the comparison between ParticipACTION and a mouse (small but powerful, beloved by some but feared by others, etc.)

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<sup>22</sup> Kisby’s Overview, “ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)”, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>23</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey.

<sup>25</sup> The New ParticipACTION Website, <http://www.participaction.com/about/special-thanks/> (Accessed May 20, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> The CJPH is the over 100 year older publication of the Canadian Public Health Association. A body with significant standing in the Canadian Public Health community. Interestingly, the CPHA was established during the moral reform movement during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The motivations of ParticipACTION’s organizers and other public health advocates mirror those of this early group of social reformers. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> “ParticipACTION: The Mouse That Roared, A Marketing and Health Communications Success Story” Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004).

with every possible mouse-like trope being employed throughout from the Mickey Mouse Club to the ‘Farmer in the Dell’.

The collection includes no fewer than three forewords, written by ParticipACTION founder Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, final Board of Directors Chair Marilyn Knox, and Canadian Public Health Association Chief Executive Officer Gerald Dafoe, respectively. Quebec-based media mogul Gaspé Beaubien begins the document by discussing his inspiration for ParticipACTION. A full unpacking of ParticipACTION’s origin story will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, but Gaspé Beaubien’s account helped to set the tone for this commemorative supplement. Squarely taking aim at the economic abandonment of ParticipACTION by Health Canada, his foreword recounted the back-and-forth with then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau regarding ParticipACTION’s founding.

Mr. Trudeau naturally asked me how much it would cost to create this organization. I replied that it costs automobile companies a minimum of five million dollars to launch a new model, and that we would need at least the same amount to change Canadian’s fitness awareness.<sup>28</sup>

Much can be analyzed in this retold exchange. First, Gaspé Beaubien was unapologetic regarding his blatant commodification of health. Second, Gaspé Beaubien was very careful in his wording when describing ParticipACTION’s aims: the goal was to change “fitness awareness”, not necessarily fitness or physical activity rates. In this foreword, Gaspé Beaubien employed every marketing tactic that became a mainstay of ParticipACTION’s brand: nostalgia, positivity, collective belonging through personal proof of worth, and overt nationalism. He then aimed a direct cannon shot across the federal government bow with the following statement:

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<sup>28</sup>Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, “ParticipACTION: The Mouse That Roared, A Marketing and Health Communications Success Story”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004).S4.

To this day, I still find it hard to understand why the federal government reduced to such an extent and then terminated its financial support for ParticipACTION, a program with such obvious health benefits for our nation.<sup>29</sup>

In truth, the federal government did not “terminate” ParticipACTION’s funding; it simply did not grant Kisby’s demand of \$1 million per year. Further, the “obvious” benefits of ParticipACTION cited by Gaspé Beaubien were not necessarily obvious or quantifiable at all.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, Beaubien questioned the nationalism of the federal government and framed ParticipACTION as an agency that truly has the wellbeing of “our nation” at heart. The entire supplement celebrated ParticipACTION.

While Gaspé Beaubien played the nostalgic patriot, Marilyn Knox’s following foreword spoke to the continued relevance of ParticipACTION as a bulwark in the fight against “the obesity crisis”<sup>31</sup>. Together ParticipACTION is effectively framed as a patriotic, familiar, and positive national organization that is needed now more than ever to confront the created moral panic known as ‘the obesity crisis’. With this armour effectively in place, it is no wonder that few dared to question the underlying motivations and uses of such an agency. Following these forewords, the supplement contains seven articles written by former ParticipACTION employees and consultants, each addressing a different accomplishment or aspect of ParticipACTION’s development.

Peggy Edwards wrote or co-wrote three of the articles presented in the CJPH supplement. A communications executive for Health Canada during the 1990s, Edwards wrote many of the information booklets, resource kits, and magazine supplement for ParticipACTION and worked

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<sup>29</sup> Gaspé Beaubien, S4

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., S4.

<sup>31</sup> “Peggy Edwards, “No Country Mouse: Thirty Years of Effective Marketing and Health Communications”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S6.

exceptionally closely with ParticipACTION's small staff during those final years.<sup>32</sup> The first of her three articles, entitled "No Country Mouse: Thirty Years of Effective Marketing and Health Communication", presents an overview history of ParticipACTION, painting the agency as remarkably forward thinking and innovative, remaining continually current in the fields of "fitness", "physical activity", and "active living".<sup>33</sup> When discussing ParticipACTION's closure, Edwards points to the deaths of "two of its strongest supporters within Health [Canada] and Fitness Canada" as the guiding reason for ParticipACTION losing favour with these two federal agencies.<sup>34</sup> This statement speaks to the intensely political nature of ParticipACTION, particularly in the 1990s, and the critical relationship between agency and government will be detailed in Chapters 6 and 7. Edwards concludes her history of ParticipACTION by pointing to "increasing concerns about obesity and the links to diabetes and other chronic diseases" as an important justification for the resurrection of ParticipACTION. Using the so-called 'obesity crisis' as the moral justification for ParticipACTION remains a politically shrewd if not ethically pernicious strategy. First, the fear tactic of obesity is a well-worn ParticipACTION trope. As Chapter 5 will discuss, during the 1980s and 1990s, ParticipACTION used the growing moral panic concerning obesity to generate anxiety so that Canadians may become more accepting and less critical of ParticipACTION's messaging.<sup>35</sup> Second, as Somerville and Jackson reported, ParticipACTION's campaigns had very little tangible effect on actual physical fitness rates among Canadians. What ParticipACTION did generate was awareness of ParticipACTION and

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<sup>32</sup> Ontario Health Promotion E-Bulletin, <http://www.ohpe.ca/taxonomy/term/64?page=6> (Accessed May 20, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Peggy Edwards, "No Country Mouse: Thirty Years of Effective Marketing and Health Communications", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S12.

<sup>34</sup> Edwards, S12.

<sup>35</sup> Brian Massumi, *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, University of Minnesota Press, (1993) viii.

its narrowly defined conception of fitness. With limited tangible effect on physical behaviour, what use could ParticipACTION be in the so-called “War on Fat”?<sup>36</sup>

In Edwards’ second article, “The Mouseketeers”, she interviewed sixteen contributors, board members, and employees about what they believed was the magic behind ParticipACTION. The consensus among the interviewees was that a sense of common cause and inspirational leadership were the two keys to ParticipACTION’s success. The language used throughout this article by the contributors conjures images of religious indoctrinates. These individuals were not framed as employees but “partners”; they were not working on a jingle but contributing to a “cause”; successes were not granted to individuals but were “shared success”. The vital importance of this cause to the nation was emphasized by many including former employee Jeannette Hanna.

I was struck by the potential of personal fitness, and how ParticipACTION could make a difference. When people are in control of their fitness, they are more in control of their lives. This can help them become more vital people and better citizens.<sup>37</sup>

While this statement discusses individual control, it becomes troublingly clear that the real control over one’s fitness does not lie with the individual, but with the state and ParticipACTION’s benevolent gatekeepers in setting the parameters of adherence to acceptable physical behaviour as evidenced by one’s physical form.<sup>38</sup> The individuals involved with ParticipACTION truly believed in the mission of creating a fit nation and would use all socially

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<sup>36</sup> “War On Flabbiness” *Moncton Times*, January 22, 1972, “Fighting against fat”, *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 19, 1972. Gear, James L. “Factors Influencing the Development of Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972.” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*. 4(2): 2-25, 1973.

<sup>37</sup> Peggy Edwards, “The Mouseketeers: People Make the Difference” Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S33.

<sup>38</sup> Here I am building on Franca Iacovetta’s definition of ‘gatekeeper’ being “those authorities who determine admission requirements and regulations for a country or institution”. In order to be considered a good citizen one must meet ParticipACTION’s stated requirements of fitness. Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Between the Lines, Toronto, 2006) xii.

acceptable coercive means to manipulate the Canadian people to achieve their ends. The importance of individual fitness to the nation was continually emphasized in ParticipACTION's public materials. In one publication, President Kisby wrote:

To get a fix on our own national fitness ideal, or to show at least that it exists, we can consider how we feel when we look at a child or teenager who is obviously over-weight, lethargic and inactive. What we sense is a foreshortening of future possibilities. We feel in some way that there is simply less that this child can be in our world. It's curious, and an indication of how deeply buried our national fitness ideal has been, that we may not think of fitness at all. But what we are really doing in this case is measuring the child's potential for a future against our own ideal national quality of life and finding it diminished because of poor fitness. Implicitly, then, the fitness idea is involved in our national self-image.<sup>39</sup>

Edwards supported this link between fitness and nation in all three of her works. The final Edwards' article in the supplement is co-written with Irving Rootman, first Director of the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto and longtime ParticipACTION contributor. Entitled "The Best Laid Schemes of Mice and Men", this article offers an explanation for ParticipACTION's fragility and overdependence on government funds in its final decade. Edwards and Irving suggest that ParticipACTION's primary audience was not citizens but the media and that, over time, ParticipACTION's management team lost perspective on this reality. ParticipACTION's funding was based on a matching formulary and, as the agency's corporate sponsorship and media connections began to degrade, so too did its government funding. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, ParticipACTION's ability to produce impactful, innovative, and easily used advertising was the key to its branding success and to its ability to prescribe a lifestyle to Canadians,<sup>40</sup> but Irving and Edwards paint an overly simplistic portrait of ParticipACTION's decline. As this dissertation will argue, ParticipACTION's weaknesses were

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<sup>39</sup> "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10 Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 6. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>40</sup> Irving Rootman & Peggy Edwards, "The Best Laid Schemes of Mice and Men...ParticipACTION's Legacy and the Future of Physical Activity Promotion in Canada", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S38.

great and many: failure to innovate during the turbulent “demassification” of the Canadian media;<sup>41</sup> failure to remain ideologically relevant in the changing academic environment of population health and public health wherein numerous organizations were being established which undermined ParticipACTION’s relevance; failure to effectively reach increasingly visible populations in the northern, rural, and First Nations communities; and failure to recognize its mandate and institutional shortcomings. Stripping away the thin veneer of national notoriety and nostalgia, ParticipACTION in its final days offered little of value to its corporate sponsors or the federal government agencies that funded it. This was the reason for its closure.

ParticipACTION’s greatest accomplishment was not creating a fitter nation but rather inculcating an idea of fitness tied to national identity for the explicit purposes of the federal government and industry. In achieving this mandate, ParticipACTION created and sustained a widely held image of fitness that was directly linked to patriotism and consumerism on a national scale.

Beyond the contributions by Peggy Edwards, the CJPH supplement includes two articles by one-time ParticipACTION Vice President Francois Lagarde. Brought in to create a special fitness program for the Department of National Defense in 1984, as Chapter 7 will discuss, Lagarde supervised some of ParticipACTION’s most creative French-language programming until his departure in 1991. Lagarde’s two supplement contributions speak to ParticipACTION’s strengths as a marketing agency and its commitment to bilingualism. These articles are exceptionally short, well written, and cautiously crafted. As oral history interviews with many ParticipACTION employees and board members have revealed, Lagarde was one of ParticipACTION’s most valuable assets during the 1980s. In 1991, ParticipACTION President

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<sup>41</sup> Francois Lagarde, “The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION’s Success”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21.



Russ Kisby lobbied for and won a lucrative contract to facilitate the community activation for the federal government's CANADA 125 celebrations. Lagarde disagreed with this move and parted ways with ParticipACTION.<sup>42</sup> As Chapters 6 and 7 discuss, ParticipACTION in the 1990s slowly degraded its national brand by taking on contracts that stretched the scope of its original mandate. Many of these contracts, such as CANADA 125 and the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000, were overtly nationalist and were financed by the federal government. Lagarde and others felt that this explicit politicization undermined the credibility of ParticipACTION with the Canadian public in general and with the people of Quebec in particular. These details are not included in Lagarde's two supplement articles that focus on the pre-1991 period and paint ParticipACTION in a positive light.

After 1991, community mobilization or activation became the catchwords of ParticipACTION's programming. This shift in focus from media to community illustrated the training and expertise of President Russ Kisby as a community animator, but it did little to encourage corporate or media sponsorship of the organization. In "Spreading the Message Through Community Mobilization, Education and Leadership: A Magnanimouse Task", former ParticipACTION staffer Christa Costas-Broadstreet speaks to this community mobilization and education as an almost philanthropic vein of ParticipACTION programming. Campaigns such as *Jump To It*, *Project APEX*, and *Active Age* strategically targeted children, the working class, and seniors with customized health promotion information that supported ParticipACTION's perceptions of health and fitness. From this article, it appears that Costas-Broadstreet is completely unaware of the condescending tone with which she describes educational programming for those Canadians who, she suggests, simply did not understand that they were

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<sup>42</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

making poor choices. “Framing health issues in ways the community can understand”, is key to helping those unable to identify and stave off their own vices.<sup>43</sup> Using the same language as moral reformers from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and post-war social workers targeting the acculturation of new Canadians, ParticipACTION employees were ‘helping’ Canadians eschew their unhealthy activities so that they may become better individuals, workers, and citizens. For the critical reader, Costas-Broadstreet’s script of the benevolent gatekeeper is blatant and pervasive.<sup>44</sup>

The last article in the CJPH supplement to be analyzed is by far the most academic in nature. Written by Adrian Bauman of the University of Sydney School of Public Health and a number of his international peers, “ParticipACTION: This Mouse Roared, But Did It Get the Cheese?” is a comparative analysis of whether ParticipACTION should be considered a social marketing initiative or health communications project. In the authors’ estimation, a social marketing initiative is “the application of generic marketing to a specific class of problems where the object of the marketer is to change social behaviour primarily to benefit the target audience and the general society.” A health communications project, by contrast, “creates awareness and informs populations about an issue, to stimulate discussion and to create social norms around health issues”.<sup>45</sup> Employing a quantitative analysis of the three national impact and awareness surveys conducted for ParticipACTION by Gallup National Omnibus and Tandemar Research during its 29-year tenure, this article argued that ParticipACTION was an innovative success story. By focusing on proximal rather than distal impact, the authors attempted to prove that

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<sup>43</sup> Christa Costas-Bradstreet, “Spreading the Message Through Community Mobilization, Education and Leadership: A Magnanimous Task”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S29.

<sup>44</sup> Mariana Valverde, *The age of light, soap, and water: moral reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991). Franca Iacovetta, *Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Adrian Bauman, Judith Madill, Cora Lynn Craig, Art Salmon, “ParticipACTION: This Mouse Roared, But Did It Get the Cheese?”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S14.

ParticipACTION was able to combine the tactics and objectives of both a health communications project and social marketing initiative to have a tangible influence on both social norms and behaviours. The findings of this short paper call for consideration of the sources. The evidence Bauman et al cite in their discussion of physical fitness rates comes directly from three ParticipACTION impact surveys, the main thrust of two being an assessment of brand recognition and not physical fitness participation rates.<sup>46</sup> The authors do not cite more impartial evidence to support the direct impact of ParticipACTION or physical fitness participation, nor do they suggest they have such evidence. The reason for their focus on relational rather than causal impact is because they have no evidence that directly links ParticipACTION's programming with marginally increased participation rates over its life. This article begins by setting the parameters of success based on ParticipACTION's marketing strengths. As such, that ParticipACTION met this criterion was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Bauman's research underwent two additional iterations, both published in a 2009 International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity article collection that analyzed the position and organizational capacity of the *New ParticipACTION*.<sup>47</sup> Bauman was a co-author on both pieces, with John Spence and Guy Faulkner as lead authors respectively. Faulkner's article, entitled "ParticipACTION: Baseline assessments of the capacity available to the 'New ParticipACTION': A qualitative study of Canadian organizations", employed a qualitative method of semi-structured phone interviews with 49 key ParticipACTION informants to assess the baseline organizational capacity of the original ParticipACTION. The stated

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<sup>46</sup> The 1992 survey was conducted to provide quantitative evidence for CrownLife Insurance that a continued relationship with ParticipACTION would be beneficial component of their marketing plan. The 1994 survey was conducted to ensure that Body Break's short-lived relationship with ParticipACTION would not have long-term impact on ParticipACTION's credibility and supremacy with Canadian consumers. These were not impartial surveys, but documents with political intent behind their creation.

<sup>47</sup> Adrian Bauman and Mark Tremblay, ed. "ParticipACTION: Baseline research on the resurgence of Canada's physical activity social marketing leader", *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, (9 December, 2009).

objective of the study was to reveal any pitfalls so that the *New ParticipACTION* could avoid or correct the mistakes of the past. The study cited four challenges that had a detrimental effect on the original ParticipACTION's effectiveness. First was "the absence of core funding in a climate of shifting funding priorities"; second, "the difficulty of working without a national physical activity policy"; third, "inconsistent provincial and educational sector level policies"; and last, "a persistent focus on obesity rather than physical inactivity".<sup>48</sup> These findings are insightful as three of the four stated challenges point to an increasingly crowded and competitive health promotion environment in Canada as critical concerns for the *New ParticipACTION*. Only the last challenge outlines a concern that could be effectively addressed internally by the organization. As Chapter 5 of this dissertation discusses, generating anxiety based on concerns over patriotic performance was the subtext of all ParticipACTION campaigns, and in the 1980s and 1990s, concerns about obesity became the overt argument for ParticipACTION's continued existence. As one Faulkner interviewee suggested, the use of obesity proved a double-edged sword for ParticipACTION. By emphasizing the obesity epidemic,

We [physical activity advocates] can shoot ourselves in the foot for two reasons: we can come in direct conflict with those in the disordered eating community because of the different messaging ... to me if you come with the message that physical activity is good for kids of all weights, shape and size that's ok, that's it, full stop. We don't need to get into these debates about how many fat kids we have or don't have – physical activity is important, period. Yes. Joy is important. The approach that we're taking in the field is based on fear and it makes me very nervous because if we go back to taking a very prescriptive role we'll just come full circle again (N2).

This subject identified two key aspects of the original ParticipACTION that contributed to its eventual downfall. First, the management choice to play on obesity anxieties was not

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<sup>48</sup> Guy Faulkner, Cora McCloy, Ronald C. Plotnikoff, Adrian Bauman, Larry R. Brawley, Karen Chad, Lise Gauvin, John C. Spence, Mark S. Tremblay, "ParticipACTION: Baseline assessment of the capacity available to the 'New ParticipACTION': A qualitative study of Canadian organizations, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 6:87 (9 December, 2009).

without its risks and, second, that prescriptive messaging based in anxiety was not necessarily a positive approach to adopt for the *New ParticipACTION*. This dissertation expands this analysis of prescriptive messaging and anxiety-based persuasion into a broader discussion of the original ParticipACTION's thirty-year evolution. While N2 effectively identified obesity as one trope of anxiety-generation used by ParticipACTION, this dissertation demonstrates that other devices such as Cold War anxiety and anxiety regarding Quebec's potential separation were also employed by ParticipACTION in an endeavour to persuade Canadians into believing and performing ParticipACTION's conception of fitness and citizenship.

The final article in this series of post-mortem analyses of the original ParticipACTION was written by John C. Spence with several co-authors, including Lawrence Brawley, Guy Faulkner, and Adrian Bauman. "ParticipACTION: Awareness of the ParticipACTION campaign among Canadian adults: Examining the knowledge gap hypothesis and a hierarchy-of-effects model" employed a population-based survey of 4650 Canadians over a six-month period between August, 2007, and February, 2008. Based on McGuire's hierarchy-of-effects model, it was hypothesized that ParticipACTION's incessant programming should influence physical activity rates "through intermediate mediators such as belief and intention".<sup>49</sup> With this premise in place, this study explored economic and social demography to find where the gaps existed in ParticipACTION brand awareness and to see if these gaps related to decreased physical fitness rates among Canadians with lower incomes and less education. Spence and his co-authors found that "education and income were significant correlates of awareness"<sup>50</sup>: those Canadians with a higher socio-economic status were more likely to recognize ParticipACTION assisted and

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<sup>49</sup> John C. Spence, Lawrence R. Brawley, Cora Lynn Craig, Ronald C. Plotnikoff, Mark S. Tremblay, Adrian Bauman, Guy Faulkner, Karen Chad, and Marianne I. Clark, "ParticipACTION: Awareness of the ParticipACTION campaign among Canadian adults – Examining the knowledge gap hypothesis and a hierarchy-of-effects model", *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* (2009) 6:85.

<sup>50</sup> Spence, 85.

unassisted, and they were also more likely to participate in leisure-time physical activity.<sup>51</sup> The study concluded “initiatives such as ParticipACTION may actually exacerbate existing differences between SES [socio-economic status] groups in both behaviour and health.”<sup>52</sup> The authors suggest “future promotion campaigns should include specific strategies to target different segments of the population, especially people who are living in deprived conditions with lower levels of education.” As Chapter 4 discusses, the findings of Spence and associates are not surprising given the demographic advertising choices made by ParticipACTION. Using GIS mapping and an analysis of a complete collection of ParticipACTION’s print exposure for a six-year dataset, it is clear that ParticipACTION programmers chose to concentrate their resources on white, urban, and southern Canadians with only limited programming reaching First Nations, rural, northern, and first-generation Canadian communities. This speaks to Edwards and Irving’s statement that ParticipACTION’s true audience was the media and not consumers. Since ParticipACTION’s marketing targeted visible and influential media markets to attract corporate sponsors and government praise, reaching socio-economically marginalized Canadians was a tertiary consideration.

#### Under-Developed Content Analysis

The third and final vein of existing literature regarding ParticipACTION explores campaign content analysis. In contrast to the wealth of writing concerning ParticipACTION’s utility as a health promotion agency, ParticipACTION’s program content remains relatively uninvestigated. Setting aside the conference papers and academic articles that have been drawn from this dissertation, only kinesiologist Margaret MacNeill has undertaken an in-depth analysis

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 85.

of ParticipACTION's cultural productions.<sup>53</sup> In 1999, MacNeill contributed an article to *Sport and Gender in Canada*, analyzing ParticipACTION's campaigns for overt messages that targeted women, demonstrating how social marketing could be used to pressure women to conform to traditional notions of health and beauty.<sup>54</sup> MacNeill's examples drawn from ParticipACTION's campaigns are few, easily refutable, and often removed from their complicating context.

In one instance, MacNeill points to a 1990s newspaper cartoon created by Francois Lagarde that features two female skaters. The byline dialogue reads, "You've started skating again?..." "Yes, I'm working on a new figure."<sup>55</sup> with 'a figure' standing as a double entendre for a skating maneuver and a transformation in body shape. Although this advertisement is ripe for gender analysis, MacNeill fails to mention either that it is merely one of an otherwise gender-balanced list of thirty-five advertisements or that the French translation of the skater ad employed a similar play-on-words targeting men's fitness rather than women's. This omission of context can be contributed to a number of factors. First, the national ParticipACTION Archives is housed within the University of Saskatchewan Archives with only a small segment of visual material available online. MacNeill may not have had access to this collection from her position in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto. Second, only a bilingual analysis of all ParticipACTION's promotional material would provide a fuller context for such

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<sup>53</sup> V. Lamb Drover, "ParticipACTION, healthism, and the crafting of a social memory, 1971-1999", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, (2015) 25:1. V. Lamb Drover, "ParticipACTION, Biocitizenship, and the Cold War", *Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting*, Congress 2014, Brock University, 26-28 May, (2014). V. Lamb Drover, "'Branding, Educating, Motivating': ParticipACTION, Social Marketing, and a Created Crisis of National Health, (1971-2001)", *Canadian Society for the History of Medicine Annual Meeting/ Congress 2013*, University of Victoria, 1-3 June (2013). V. Lamb Drover, "'And what is the measurement of a man?': ParticipACTION and changing the image of health. (1971-2001)", *Keewatin Country Graduate Student History Conference*, jointly held by the Universities of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Winnipeg, 25-26 April, (2014). V. Lamb Drover, "ParticipACTION: A media history of cultural impact", *Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting/ Congress 2012*, Wilfrid Laurier University/ University of Waterloo, 28-30 May, (2012).

<sup>54</sup> Margaret MacNeill, "Social Marketing, Gender, and the Science of Fitness: A Case-Study of ParticipACTION Campaigns," *Sport and Gender in Canada*, Philip White and Kevin Young, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> ParticipACTION Campaign Collection, ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291 2004-41 (11).

an advertisement. Regardless of these mitigating circumstances, MacNeill's analysis of the gendered nature of ParticipACTION's campaigns needs further evidence to support her claims.

By contrast, this dissertation benefits from unfettered access to the complete national collection. It also marks the first content analysis of ParticipACTION programming to include all materials in both official languages. Despite MacNeill's concerns regarding the gendered nature of ParticipACTION's messaging, she did not go so far as to criticize ParticipACTION's underlying mission of behaviour modification to create a more physically fit nation. This dissertation marks the first academic study to question the motives and benefits of this underlying mission. ParticipACTION's corporate sponsors, public funding bodies, and managers had a vested interest in trying to change the beliefs and behaviours of the people of Canada. For many of these gatekeepers, the motives were economic; for others, their reward lay in a sense of belonging and social elevation. Regardless of the payoffs, the subtext of performed embodied citizenship in this nation-building project remained unchanged.<sup>56</sup> Charting ParticipACTION's development from inception to closure, this dissertation offers critical analysis of the agency's evolving position within Canada's social memory.<sup>57</sup> Canadians remember ParticipACTION because of its expert use of social marketing tools combined with on-the-ground word-of-mouth and social peer pressure. This dissertation discusses the ways in which this potent mixture of prescriptive messaging was developed and offers suggestions regarding the effects this messaging had on Canadians' perceptions of physical fitness and citizenship. As Kisby suggested, perception is critical to behavioural change.

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<sup>56</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi and Chris Beasley, "Citizen bodies: is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?", *Critical Social Policy*, 22:2 (2002) 324.

<sup>57</sup> The concept of social memory employed in this dissertation is drawn from Jonathon Vance's definition meaning "any society's conception of the past". Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and The First World War*, (University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 9.



The fitness idea is now a Canadian resource. At ParticipACTION we believe that the idea helps to create the fact. That's why we will continue to say that walking around the block is as important as running a marathon. It may not be as significant physiologically, but simple participation in the fitness idea will ultimately do as much for changing the Canadian reality as anything can.<sup>58</sup>

ParticipACTION was in the business of persuasion, resulting in the embedding of 'a national self-image' created by Kisby's design. That over 90% of Canadians still recognize

ParticipACTION's logo and name speaks to the power of these ideas and ParticipACTION's success in embedding them in the Canadian popular culture.

### Guided by the Sources

This investigation did not begin with a predetermined research question, hypothesis, or academic agenda. It began with a collection. During its 29 years of operation, ParticipACTION created 32 campaigns and projects, most of which loosely addressed some aspect of physical activity.<sup>59</sup> From the creation of *Sneaker Days* at CrownLife Insurance's Toronto head office<sup>60</sup> to ParticipACTION's role as "the community animation unit"<sup>61</sup> in promoting CANADA 125, the breadth and scope of ParticipACTION programming was tremendous. This is reflected in the volume of the ParticipACTION Archive located at the University of Saskatchewan Archives in Saskatoon, SK. Over 7.6 metres of textual materials, along with 12 metres of audio-visual materials in the form of VHS tapes, Beta tapes, and CD-ROMs comprise the ParticipACTION collection. The running time of the content contained within these 12 metres of mixed media is unknown as the entire collection has never been properly processed. Deposited in 2004, the contents of the ParticipACTION Archive were donated by former ParticipACTION President

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<sup>58</sup> "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10 Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 6. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>59</sup> Kisby's Overviews, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>60</sup> Kisby's Overviews list 31 independent projects, I would add Body Break although it is missing from Kisby's evaluation of the agency's programming. MG 291 2004-41 (4) ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>61</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

(1978-2001) Russ Kisby. After seeing his beloved organization close in 1999 and during a prolonged struggle with a rare and aggressive cancer,<sup>62</sup> Kisby took it upon himself to create a public record of his life's work. The ParticipACTION Archive is that monument. Due to a lack of archival resources, the only cataloging of this collection was conducted by Kisby at the time of donation and takes the form of "Kisby's Overviews", a binder that discusses almost every program undertaken by ParticipACTION. Much of the collection lacks content description, and the majority of boxes do not conform to any particular order. Instead, each box offers a new window into the world of ParticipACTION. The mystery of where that window may appear or how large it may open became an unavoidable reality of the research process. This absence of processing is a result of a lack of archival resources and, frankly, research interest in the collection. Written a decade after the archive's founding, this dissertation will be the first in-depth research project to be based in this national collection.<sup>63</sup> The ParticipACTION Archive is a contemporary historical collection with a national scope that is not redacted, depersonalized, or hampered by lengthy institutional issues of access. It is a tremendous repository that allowed for exceptional intellectual freedom in this research project and, without which, this dissertation could not have been undertaken.

Along with the full-text ParticipACTION Archive located at the University of Saskatchewan, Russ Kisby also wanted to make a portion of the archival content readily available online.<sup>64</sup> This digital project was funded jointly by the Canadian Council of Archives and the Ministry of Canadian Heritage with content provided by Russ Kisby and hosted online

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<sup>62</sup> Christa Costas-Bradstreet, "Remembering Russ Kisby, Former President of ParticipACTION, CAHPERD President, 1982-83", *Physical & Health Education Journal*, (2007) 73:47.

<sup>63</sup> This is a position of tremendous weight which is not taken without an appropriate degree of deference given to the archive's founder for his foresight, to archivist Cheryl Avery for her vision in recruiting and retaining this collection, and to the hundreds of volunteers and employees that gave of their time to this agency.

<sup>64</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Email correspondence with Archivist Cheryl Avery, University of Saskatchewan Special Collections, (June 17, 2013).

by the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>65</sup> Entitled “ParticipACTION Archives Project”, this site provides a timeline of ParticipACTION campaigns, sound bites of oral interviews with President Kisby, Dr. Don Bailey, and Marilyn Knox, some colour advertising mock-ups, and television commercials. Compiled by Cormana Communications, it is visually appealing and well-organized, but displays approximately 5% of the full content available in the physical repository.<sup>66</sup>

Given the sheer magnitude of the complete archival collection, three areas were targeted in this investigation for thorough investigation: The Clipping Collection, The Program Collection, and Kisby’s Overviews. These ‘areas’ cannot be easily denoted by fonds or official titles due to the lack of processing within the archive. Therefore, the titles given to these three areas are solely for the purpose of this dissertation and will not appear as retrievable fonds within the ParticipACTION Archive.

### Oral Interviews

Supplementing, complementing, and complicating these archival records are twenty-two oral histories from ParticipACTION employees, board members, presidents, event participants, researchers, and volunteers.<sup>67</sup> A process of ‘snowball sampling’<sup>68</sup> was undertaken in order to find these oral history candidates. This began with Dr. Don Bailey who was a former Board member for the local PARTICIPaction Saskatoon and the national ParticipACTION Board of Directors, and was also Russ Kisby’s former professor at the University of Saskatchewan. Sitting for multiple oral interviews and fielding numerous email questions; providing names of other

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.usask.ca/archives/participation> (splash page).

<sup>66</sup> This is an estimation based on a review of the website in comparison to the sources available within the physical collection at the University of Saskatchewan Archives. This percentage was extrapolated based on experience with both collections and does not represent a full quantitative analysis of the images and text provided online.

<sup>67</sup> All interviews approved by University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Beh# 12-36, Approved March 25, 2012. Renewed March 25, 2013, March 25, 2014 and March 25, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> S. Berg, “Snowball Sampling.” *Encyclopedia of Statistical Sciences* no. 8 (1988): 529-533.

involved individuals as well as contacting them when my attempts proved fruitless; and offering his personal papers, DVDs, and tapes – without Dr. Bailey, this history of ParticipACTION would have taken a far more clinical and impersonal form, void of the tremendous cultural nuance provided by the oral histories he both provided and facilitated. In true academic form, Dr. Bailey never attempted to influence the research objectives of this study, nor advocate for a particular interpretation of ParticipACTION’s history. Although intimately involved with ParticipACTION for over twenty-five years, Bailey showed no overt bias and welcomed critical reflection of ParticipACTION’s cultural legacy.<sup>69</sup>

While Bailey was the initial interview on which the ‘snowball’ began rolling, his recommended interview candidates were all cross-referenced with the Campaign Collection of the ParticipACTION Archives before contact. Additional interview candidates named in the ParticipACTION Archives but not suggested by Bailey were also contacted for clarification regarding certain programs, time periods, and topics. This combined list of archival referencees and snowball suggested candidates was exhaustive, including former city mayors from Victoria to Fredericton, former Ministers of Health and Welfare, former provincial partners, former ParticipACTION board members and presidents, and former ParticipACTION campaign spokespersons Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod. For the case study of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, all living former board members were contacted, as well as former local event participants drawn from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* newspaper. Interviews with individuals residing outside of Saskatchewan were conducted over the phone, while the remaining oral interviews were conducted in participants’ homes or at the University of Saskatchewan, based on the interviewee’s preference. The interviews ranged in length from 10 minutes to 2½ hours,

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<sup>69</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

depending entirely on how much the interviewee wanted to share. Two sets of predetermined questions formed the basis of the interview with follow-up questions posed for clarification and elaboration. Members of the first group were posed Phase 1 questions designed for those individuals under the employ or service of ParticipACTION, such as board members, employees, and volunteers. ‘Phase 2’ questions were posed to event participants with no prior link to ParticipACTION (Appendix 1).<sup>70</sup> The Phase 2 interviews were conducted to gauge ParticipACTION’s influence among early adopters and their perceptions of health and fitness and ParticipACTION’s role in their personal adherence. All interviewees who wished to go on record were digitally recorded, and copies were sent to the participant upon request. Two high-profile interviewees wished to remain anonymous with no direct quotes accredited to their interviews. Respecting their wishes, the content from these interviews will not be directly discussed, excepting information that was independently revealed by other citable sources. All interviews were conducted by approval of the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan and were facilitated by Victoria Lamb Drover between September, 2012, and October, 2014.<sup>71</sup> All authorized interviews will eventually be deposited as companion records to the ParticipACTION Archives for the use of future researchers. The memories of these individuals are an essential component of this study of ParticipACTION and its position as a gatekeeper of acceptable physical fitness and citizenship.<sup>72</sup>

The use of oral histories as an essential tool in the process of uncovering social memories is an established method codified by Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson as early as 1980.

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<sup>70</sup> All interviews approved by University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Beh# 12-36, Approved March 25, 2012. Renewed March 25, 2013 and March 25, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Beh# 12-36, Approved March 25, 2012. Renewed March 25, 2013 and March 25, 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi and Chris Beasley, “Citizen bodies: is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?”, *Critical Social Policy*, 22:2 (2002) 324.

According to Johnson and Dawson, the recording of oral histories works to undermine the dominant narrative of documented history by giving voice to those silenced by traditional power relationships.<sup>73</sup> They point to the employment of oral histories in the discipline of women's history as a clear example of the ongoing attempt to return agency and voice to those groups often marginalized by conventional historical methods and priorities.<sup>74</sup> The oral interviews conducted in association with this dissertation have been undertaken to this end.

This investigation of ParticipACTION has also employed the historical theoretical approach of 'reading the silences' championed by feminist scholars Parlo Singh<sup>75</sup> and Estelle B. Freedman<sup>76</sup> in its reading of archival records and oral histories alike. While ParticipACTION stakeholders and participants were specifically targeted as potential oral history candidates, gender, regional, and ethnic representation among these groups was mindfully considered in the collection process. In this history of ParticipACTION, all records are given equal weight and are critically examined with the same degree of rigour. It must be remembered that while the written records may offer the illusion of impartiality, the ParticipACTION Archives is the culmination of one man's self-created legacy and, as such, should be subjected to the same process of second-source verification as any other primary material provided by an individual historical actor.

#### Thematic discussions within a linear structure

The history of a 29-year organization with two distinct administrations and several important campaign shifts occurring in the midst of a constantly changing political arena presents an interesting challenge in terms of chapter organization. The six content chapters of

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Johnson and Graham Dawson of the Popular Memory Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, England. "Popular memory: Theory, politics, method", in *The oral history reader*, eds. (Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, Routledge, 1998), 77.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> P. Singh, "Reading the silences within critical feminist theory.", in P. Reebbody, S. Muspratt & A. Luke, eds. *Constructing critical literacies*, (New York: Hampton Press. 1997), 77-94.

<sup>76</sup> Estelle B. Freedman, "'The Burning of Letters Continues': Elusive Identities and the Historical Constructions of Sexuality", *Journal of Women's History*, 9:4 (1998) 181-200.

this dissertation are offered in a somewhat linear fashion with chapter 2 addressing ParticipACTION's origin story, chapter 3 discussing its first community pilot project, chapter 4 exploring early campaign distribution, and so on. This more-or-less chronological format was consciously shaped to offer the reader a clear understanding of sequence in ParticipACTION's development. Within this chronological ordering, each chapter uses a different analytical lens and corresponding methodological approach to study ParticipACTION, its social memory, and its role as a nation-building project of biological citizenship. In all cases, the sources and topic dictated the approach. For instance, in chapter 4's analyses of regional variation in social memory, GIS mapping presented the most logical methodological tool to reveal where the gaps existed in ParticipACTION's national programming. Conversely, Chapter 5's discussion of ParticipACTION's use of fat imagery in the agency's employment of anxiety called for post-structural content analysis as the most effective method. Holding this patchwork of seemingly disjointed methodologies together is the chronological skeleton that follows the natural progression of ParticipACTION from its founding to its closure. The end product is hopefully a series of revealing snapshots into ParticipACTION's history presenting a better understanding of the whole.

#### Current developments in the field of Sports Studies

Within the interdisciplinary field of sports studies, the shift towards postmodern analyses of the body as a site of contested gender, citizenship, and class has not occurred without its fair share of resistance. During the late 1980s and 1990s, two schools of thought were entrenched within the discipline, each with their Canadian advocates. Colin Howell, Alan Metcalfe and, arguably, Bruce Kidd favoured a Marxist analysis of sporting culture, employing the theories of Antonio Gramsci, Edward Thompson, and Raymond Williams to support their analytical

approach.<sup>77</sup> In a lament entitled “On Metcalfe, Marx, and Materialism”, Colin Howell grieves the linguistic turn and growing adherence to discourse analysis that, he believed, slowly infected the field of sports history during the 1990s. Howell posits that in a desperate attempt to appear interdisciplinary and innovative, “social history” had allowed itself to become “polluted” by the disjointed theories of the social sciences and, as a result, had become “a gathering place for the unscholarly, for historians bereft of ideas and subtlety”.<sup>78</sup> Howell called for a return to the “cultural Marxism” founded in the writing of his mentor Alan Metcalfe, a British-born historian of sport whose research, both Canadian and British, focused on the political power of sport as a mechanism of potential social elevation or, at times, socio-economic boundary maintenance. Metcalfe’s work does not employ ‘the body’, but the place, people, and performance of sport as the arena of negotiated personal identity.<sup>79</sup>

A similar approach can be found in the work of Canadian sport historian Bruce Kidd who, in his PhD. dissertation chronicling the development of four national sports organizations in Canada, skillfully demonstrated how each embodied a different political philosophical use of sport. *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists, and Socialists* pinned four fledgling national sports organizations against one another with the capitalist National Hockey League successfully winning the day. While this and other Kidd works do not focus on the body as a site of political control, the political, gendered, and socio-economic use of sport is thoroughly considered.<sup>80</sup> This investigation of ParticipACTION draws on Kidd’s astute observations regarding the “political capital of sport in fostering productive citizenship” and that this political capital “includes strict

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<sup>77</sup> Colin D. Howell, “On Metcalfe, Marx, and Materialism: Reflections on the Writing of Sport History in the Postmodern Age”, *Sport History Review*, 29:1(May 1998) 96.

<sup>78</sup> Howell, 96.

<sup>79</sup> A. Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914*, (Oxford University press, 1997) 14.

<sup>80</sup> Bruce Kidd, *The struggle for Canadian sport*, (University of Toronto Press, 1996).



adherence to amateurism.”<sup>81</sup> Kidd suggests that as a sport organization becomes more professional, it loses that untarnished connection to forthright patriotism and nationalism. As this dissertation discusses, this relational concept can be clearly seen in ParticipACTION’s development. During the 1980s, as new health promotion agencies and informational sources developed in Canada, ParticipACTION’s administration focused on the professionalization of their services and the bolstering of their growing status as experts in order to cement their position as the healthy living authority in Canada.<sup>82</sup> I argue that in doing so, ParticipACTION lost touch with the grassroots supporters who garnered the organization its initial success. While Kidd’s study suggests the NHL won the day, he adds that the amateur organizations turned their attention to the Olympic movement and international sport, which then paved the way for government to develop sports along national lines in the 1960s<sup>83</sup>, which is arguably establishing the political framework for the creation of ParticipACTION in 1971. Kidd, Metcalfe, and Howell should be applauded for their contributions to the field of sports history, but Howell is correct in saying that their type of “materialism” was quickly becoming “passé” within the newly broadened field of sports studies.<sup>84</sup> In 1998, Genevieve Rail edited a collection of sports studies that employed post-modernist theory in the analysis of sports history. Contributors such as Brian Pronger posited that modern sport as a project of socio-cultural boundary maintenance reinforced established binaries in western society, “man and woman; ...white and ‘other’, healthy and sick”. While Pronger was discussing sport exclusively, this dissertation suggests broadening Pronger’s concept to include all socially promoted forms of physical activity. ParticipACTION’s

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<sup>81</sup> Bruce Kidd, *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists and Socialists: Shaping Canadian Sport in the 1920s and 1930s*, (PhD diss., York University, 1990) 4.

<sup>82</sup> COACH, Canada’s Health Information Association was created in 1980 and would prove a national authority for the networking of health information professionals.

<sup>83</sup> Kidd, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Colin D. Howell, On Metcalfe, Marx, and Materialism: Reflections on the Writing of Sport History in the Postmodern Age, *Sport History Review*, 29:1 (May 1998) 98.

prescriptive programming maintained all of these listed binaries and worked to marginalize those deemed to deviate. Rail's collection examined a cresting trend in sports studies that only became more nuanced in the 2000s. In "Cycle of Manhood", Robert Kossuth and Kevin Wamsley conducted a localized case study of the history of bicycling in London, Ontario from the 1880s to the 1910s. First painted as a "public display of lurid bodies", cycling was for a brief period effectively gentrified and legitimized through the creation of the exclusive Forest City Cycling Club.<sup>85</sup> The elite club allowed its male-only members to physically compete for supremacy in the very public performance of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, white, upper-class, masculinity. During the 1890s as the price of bicycles sharply decreased due to mass production, the prestige and exclusivity of cycling was lost and the sport again returned to its status as a "public nuisance". Based heavily on newspaper reports of the club's activities, Kossuth and Wamsley effectively link the act of cycling to the physical rigour required in the perceived cultivation of "good citizenship" among its young, physically active participants.<sup>86</sup> The link between physical performance and citizenship is a palpable undercurrent to many discourse analyses in sports studies, but none could be considered as overt as that of Don Morrow in his Canadian Issues paper concerning the 1972 Summit Series.<sup>87</sup> Skillfully contextualized and economically written, Morrow demonstrates how the myth of the Summit Series exactly mirrors that of a heroic quest with the Canadian players depicted as knights in defense of their nation. He suggests that the truth has become far less important than the established myth in its cultivation of Canadian national identity and that many attributes claimed by Canadians such as honesty, friendliness, and humility have been

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<sup>85</sup> Robert S. Kossuth & Kevin B. Wamsley, "Cycle of Manhood: Pedaling Respectability in Ontario's Forest City", *Sport History Review*, 34:2 (Nov. 2003) 168.

<sup>86</sup> Kossuth & Wamsley, 168.

<sup>87</sup> Don Morrow, "The Mythic and the Mono-Mythic: Representations of the 1972 Canada vs. USSR Hockey Series", *Canadian Issues / Themes Canadiens* 57 (2012) 32.

expertly integrated into this unchallengeable sports legend. As this dissertation suggests, the process of national mythmaking was very much at play in the entrenchment of ParticipACTION's social memory. As Phase 2 oral history interviews reveal, the social memories of ParticipACTION and its perceived efficacy had little to do with the reality of the agency. The idea that ParticipACTION was doing good work for Canadians or was necessitated by the obesity crisis trumped any discussion of tangible program effectiveness with the subject group. The myth was made more powerful than the reality in re-enforcing the cultivated social menace of obesity. J. L. Gear, writing in the *Canadian Journal of Sport & Physical Education* in 1973, examined Canadian government funding of physical fitness programs from 1850 to 1972. He posited that if the purpose of government is to pass legislation that best provides for the needs of society, the seemingly continuous presence of government physical fitness programs must be a response to the ongoing socially constructed need for these services.<sup>88</sup> Gear then methodically outlined the successive reasons that have justified the need for the federal government to encourage Canadians to become physically fit. From the South African War to the Great Depression, 'security' was framed as the paramount reason for the continued funding of physical fitness programs. As this dissertation will outline, ParticipACTION fostered Cold War anxiety, promoted the Obesity Crisis and even played on the anxiety of Quebec Separatism in the 1990s to justify the organization's continued existence.

Another vein of the current literature in sport studies that informs this dissertation is that of the gendered body's negotiation within sports. Concepts of masculinity, femininity, and the gendering of physical activity are constantly being contested within the performance, rhetoric, and surveillance of sport. This trend is demonstrated by the works of Kossuth and Wamsley in cycling, of Andrew Holman with cross-boarder hockey players, Mary Louise Adams regarding

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<sup>88</sup> Gear, 1.

the feminization and resistance to this feminization in the field of figure skating, and attempted by Margaret MacNeill in her analysis of ParticipACTION's programming.<sup>89</sup> This use of discourse analysis in the unpacking of gendered notions of the body and citizenship is an exceptionally well-established vein of the current research in sport studies. Howell believes that this is because gender was the avenue through which the history of sport was convoluted by post-structural analysis. While this is a particularly jaded interpretation, Howell is not entirely incorrect in his observation. Respected gender scholars such as Joan Scott and Jonathan Ned Katz view post-structuralism and the linguistic turn as exceptionally useful analytical tools in the deconstruction of established gendered archetypes.<sup>90</sup> It is through a gendered lens that sport studies was first introduced to discourse analysis, and the same historiographic trend can be found for interdisciplinary scholarship that informs this history of ParticipACTION, namely, obesity studies.

### Obesity Studies, Food Studies, Healthism, and Propaganda

Over its 29 years of programming, ParticipACTION employed many devices to hook Canadians and generate a public anxiety in order to render them more susceptible to the agency's behaviour modification tactics. ParticipACTION was first established to justify the allocation of federal financial resources to physical fitness in order to groom Cold Warriors in the proxy battleground of international sporting competition. As the political capital of that argument began to wane, the growing moral panic of the obesity epidemic was often cited by

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<sup>89</sup> Robert S. Kossuth & Kevin B. Wamsley, "Cycle of Manhood: Pedaling Respectability in Ontario's Forest City", *Sport History Review*, 23:2 (Nov. 2003) 168-189., Andrew C. Holman, "The Canadian Hockey Player Problem: Cultural Reckoning and National Identities in American Collegiate Sport, 1947-80," *Canadian Historical Review*, 88:3 (September 2007) 439-468., Mary Louise Adams, *Artistic Impressions: Figure Skating, Masculinity and the Limits of Sport*, (University of Toronto Press, 2011)., Margaret MacNeill, "Social Marketing, Gender, and the Science of Fitness: A Case-Study of ParticipACTION Campaigns," *Sport and Gender in Canada*, Philip White and Kevin Young, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>90</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A useful category of historical analysis", *The Feminist History Reader*, Sue Morgan, ed. (Routledge, 2006). Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

ParticipACTION officials as the uncontested justification for ParticipACTION's continued existence. Drawing from the work of Paul Campos, et al, this dissertation suggests that the created health crisis surrounding the supposed obesity epidemic has far more to do with cultural and political constructions of identity than it does with any threat that increased body weight posed to public health.<sup>91</sup> Despite the fact that little evidence exists in the epidemiological literature to support the causal relationship of high average weight with so-called weight related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, or cancer, the obesity epidemic has become established as a legitimate public health concern because it offers tangible physical evidence of politically constructed deviant behaviour performed on the body of a country's citizens.<sup>92</sup> As Hillel Schwartz suggests in her work *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat*, "weight is a cultural condition" not merely a measurement on a scale but a process of judging, resulting in either the acceptance of those deemed to be normal or the marginalizing of those deemed to be deviant.<sup>93</sup> Caught in a culture of consumerism which insists we consume ever more, those bodies which belie this consumption are not encouraged to cut back but rather switch tack and consume diet products, pills and potions to hide this admission as evidenced by the body.

This process of judging and shunning can create tremendous anxiety surrounding the consumption of food. As John Coveney has argued in *Food, Morals and Meaning: The pleasure and anxiety of eating*, "anxiety about our appetite for food have given and continue to give rise to

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<sup>91</sup> Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger, Eric Oliver, and Glenn Gaesser, "The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: public health crisis or moral panic?", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, (2006); 35:56. Jenny Ellison "Not Jane Fonda: Aerobics for Fat Women Only", in *The Fat Studies Reader*, Esther Rothblum and Sandra Solovay ed. (New York University Press, 2009) 312.

<sup>92</sup> Campos, 56. Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950*, (University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>93</sup> Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat*, The Free Press, New York, (1986) 4.

concerns about the very moral fabric of society.”<sup>94</sup> ParticipACTION preyed on this anxiety to advance, as Kisby’s suggested, Canada’s “national self-image”.<sup>95</sup> In the case of ParticipACTION, this process of societal manipulation has not been examined because ParticipACTION employed common-sense statements in their engagement with the public. As Charloote Biltekoff has cited, “Common sense statements in a culture are...an index of certain beliefs so dear to the heart of the people that they are presented as the bedrock of reality.”<sup>96</sup> Biltekoff also explores the role of reformers as middle-class conveyors and protectors of social norms and suggests that reformers played a certain cultural role even if they were not aware of doing so, “delineating social norms and imposing the values of the middle class through the seemingly neutral language of diet.”<sup>97</sup> Biltekoff also makes the link between obesity and acceptable citizenship, stating that campaigns against obesity consistently reinforce the social value of self-control and insist that thinness is equivalent to fitness for citizenship.<sup>98</sup>

According to University of Manitoba critical health scholar Deborah McPhail, as early as the 1880s, obesity discourse focused exclusively on white, middle-class Canadians since obesity was framed as a contagious disease caused by the excessive food consumption and less physically demanding lifestyle of a modern society.<sup>99</sup> As such, this contagion could not conceivably strike other Canadians – Aboriginal, immigrant, poor – since they were not party to the white middle-class.<sup>100</sup> This racializing and pathologizing discourse remained into the late

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<sup>94</sup> John Coveney, *Food, Morals and Meaning: The pleasure and anxiety of eating*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Routledge (2006) iiv.

<sup>95</sup> “A Fit Nation”, *PARTICIPACTION’s 10 Anniversary Report, 1971–1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 6. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>96</sup> Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food & Health*, Duke University Press (2013) 5.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 125.

<sup>99</sup> Deborah McPhail, *Canada Weighs In: Gender, Race, and The Making of “Obesity” 1945-70*, (PhD diss., University, 2009) 5.

<sup>100</sup> This dichotomy would shift as high-calorie, cheap, fast food became affordable for economically disadvantaged Canadians.

1960s, and the continuance of this mindset may help explain why ParticipACTION's 1971-1976 campaigns neglected rural, northern, First Nations, and first-generation Canadian communities.<sup>101</sup> Even in the 1980s, Kisby was asserting the link between a modern lifestyle, inactivity, and obesity.<sup>102</sup> McPhail's research is part of a recent and growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship examining the history of obesity and the social construction of the current 'war on obesity' with a particular emphasis on gender, class, and race.<sup>103</sup> Catherine Carstairs' case study of American nutritionist and activist Adelle Davis supports McPhail's claim that health experts during the 1970s believed "primitive people" were more happy and healthy due to their inability to consume processed goods or engage in a modern lifestyle.<sup>104</sup> Works such as the 2005 collection edited by Michael Gard and Jan Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic*, also critique the construction of the obesity crisis as a reaction to the perceived decadence of Western society, supported by scientific 'truths' and perpetuated by the media and government as a means to maintain power over the bodies of the nation.<sup>105</sup> As Carol Bacchi and Chris Beasley outline in their 2002 research into "citizen bodies" and legislation surrounding artificial reproductive technology (ART), the state's imposition of control over the individual citizen's body must be carefully negotiated.<sup>106</sup> In analyzing Australian legislation, Bacchi and Beasley found that

the role of the state is described in terms of *not* intruding on a citizen's control over their body, a control that is equated to political autonomy. If a political

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<sup>101</sup> McPhail, 4.

<sup>102</sup> "When times were harder and life more physically rigorous, people were naturally active in the course of their day. But in a modern society where physical activity is not the norm...it means that the fitness idea must grow before fitness itself can develop and become a personal and social reality." "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10 Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 4-5. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>103</sup> Michael Gard and Jan Wright, *The Obesity Epidemic: Science, morality and ideology*, (Routledge, 2005) 16.

<sup>104</sup> Catherine Carstairs, "'Our Sickness Record Is a National Disgrace': Adelle Davis, Nutritional Determinism, and the Anxious 1970s." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 69: 3 (2012) 481.

<sup>105</sup> Gard and Wright, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi and Chris Beasley, "Citizen bodies: is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?", *Critical Social Policy*, 22:2 (2002) 324.

subject is deemed not to exercise this control, forms of regulation and constraint – limitations on ‘autonomy’ – become justifiable.<sup>107</sup>

Placed in a discussion of physical fitness, if one is adhering to the weight expectations of state-prescribed healthy living, they are demonstrating control *of* their body, while not adhering suggests that they are being controlled *by* their body and therefore need help to reestablish authority over their body. This ‘help’ takes the form of institutional gatekeepers and legislation designed to change behaviour deemed deviant by authorities. ParticipACTION, with its helping message and underlying agenda of behaviour modification, is a clear example of moral regulation funded by the state and executed by gatekeepers prescribing morally acceptable citizenship. This form of moral regulation is well-trodden ground for historians of gender such as Wendy Mitchinson, Sharon Cook, Catherine Carstairs, and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh who established that concern about obesity in Canada not only predates ParticipACTION but also the Second World War.<sup>108</sup> Cook’s Canadian study and Warsh’s comparable American work reveal that class was thoroughly considered by marketing agencies of the 1910s onward in their creation of campaigns targeting women as cigarette smokers. Smoking was purposefully framed as middle-class and “sophisticated”<sup>109</sup> to ensure those who wanted to be ‘en vogue’ would feel pressured to partake. Situated in pre-1950s America, Warsh found that women’s smoking rate increased exponentially after Lucky Strike launched the slogan “Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet” adding credence to the claim that smoking acted as an appetite suppressant. Despite the known health risks associated with smoking, the stated dieting benefits outweighed the risk. For

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<sup>107</sup> Bacchi and Beasley, 324.

<sup>108</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950*, (University of Toronto Press, 2002). Catherine Carstairs, ““Our Sickness Record Is a National Disgrace”: Adelle Davis, Nutritional Determinism, and the Anxious 1970s.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 69: 3 (2012) 481. Sharon Cook. ““Liberation Sticks’ or ‘Coffin Nails’? Representations of the Working Woman and Cigarette Smoking in Canada, 1919-1939.”, *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 24:2 (2007) 367-401. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh. “Smoke and Mirrors: Gender Representation in North American Tobacco and Alcohol Advertisements Before 1950”, *Social History*, 31:62 (1998) 183-222.

<sup>109</sup> Warsh, 200.



these women, being thin was far more important than being healthy. The pathologizing of obesity has been of process of moral regulation and gender imposition as obesity and ‘fat’, its non-medicalized counterpart, have been constantly feminized and demonized in the mass media.

The mass media was where ParticipACTION’s prescriptive messaging was at its most powerful and, as such, this dissertation draws heavily upon the writing of Canadian media historians such as Paul Rutherford. Rutherford’s aptly titled *Endless Propaganda* outlines the slow absorption of corporate marketing strategies into the Canadian public sphere during the 1970s and 1980s which resulted, by the end of the twentieth century, in the irrevocable undermining of the legitimacy of the liberal democratic state.<sup>110</sup>

Rutherford suggests that ‘propaganda’ should be considered an overarching term which carries a variety of pseudonyms depending on one’s academic discipline. According to Rutherford, the reason that the term ‘propaganda’ has fallen out of fashion is in large part due to the close association it shared with the work of Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi regime. While propaganda may stand as the best descriptor of the conscious use of the media to effect public opinion, political policy, and social change, Rutherford employs ‘civic advocacy’ as a less loaded alternative. According to Rutherford:

Civic advocacy fashions a world full of problems but also full of solutions, a place where social issues are individualized and personal agency is celebrated. Leaders become retailers, citizens appear as buyers. Answers lie in the mass consumption of public goods.<sup>111</sup>

Devoting a chapter to the marketing of health causes, Rutherford adds his voice to the many postmodern theorists suggesting that the body has become a frequent battleground of control. Health advocacy messaging depicts the body as always under threat, be it from smoking,

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<sup>110</sup> Rutherford’s thoughtful collection of essays on the impact of pervasive propaganda in reshaping a society’s values and concerns will act as the theoretical bedrock of this dissertation.

<sup>111</sup> Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*, (University of Toronto Press, 2000) 15.

tanning, drinking, overeating, or promiscuity.<sup>112</sup> Ill-equipped to identify and stave off this constant barrage of threats brought on by our own personal vices, health advocacy is effective because it generates a “low-level fear – naturalized fear, ambient fear”<sup>113</sup> or, as I would suggest, anxiety, which has become a daily part of North American life. Bombarded by their messages, few members of a society think to question its efficacy, allowing health advocacy to produce engrained social truths affirmed through a process of continued reinforcement. According to Rutherford, fear is an unbelievably effective marketing tool. Fear can justify drastic action; fear can silence discussion and dissenting voices; fear can provoke citizens to undertake prescribed action.<sup>114</sup> Succinctly put, “promoting fear is another way of exercising power”.<sup>115</sup> As this dissertation demonstrates, ParticipACTION advertisements constructed an active and healthy lifestyle as a mandatory component of good citizenship. This aspect of ParticipACTION’s identity required that individual Canadians perform their patriotism through daily adherence to ParticipACTION’s prescribed concept of a healthy lifestyle.

The vested interest of government and industry in the health of a nation or national workforce drew significant academic evaluation in the 1970s. This academic attention developed as a response to political discussions in both Canada and the United States about the growing cost of public health care and where the onus should lie for the health of the individual. Several medical experts such as Dr. John Knowles pushed back against contemporary public rhetoric that suggested healthcare should be considered a human right. In response, Knowles stated, “Though I am not particularly attracted by the language of rights and duties in regard to health, I would

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<sup>112</sup> Deborah Levine, *Managing American Bodies: Diet, Nutrition, and Obesity in America, 1840-1920*. Dissertation Abstracts International, 69:4 (2008) 1517. John C. Burnham, *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehaviour, and Swearing in American History*: New York: University Press, 1993.

<sup>113</sup> Brian Massumi, *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1993) viii.

<sup>114</sup> Rutherford, 115.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 115.

lean much more in the direction, once traditional, of saying that health is a *duty*, that one has an obligation to preserve one's own good health."<sup>116</sup> Knowles does not clearly state to whom the *duty* of maintaining health should be held, but the onus is quite clear: the maintenance of health should not rest on the state but individuals alone. Growing out of this established sense of duty, those who chose to partake in deviant unhealthy behaviour such as smoking, drinking, and over-eating were flagrantly shirking this responsibility. This line of thinking fails to take into consideration environmental factors such as poverty, education, and race that remain critical determinants of health often existing outside of the control of the individual under surveillance. The obsession to obtain a healthy body as the primary means of happiness was first outlined by Robert Crawford in 1979. Crawford defines the concept of healthism as "the preoccupation with personal health as a primary – often the primary – focus for the definition and achievement of well-being; a goal which is to be attained primarily through the modification of life styles"<sup>117</sup>. This dissertation provides evidence that Russ Kisby and his followers exhibited a strong adherence to the idea of healthism as described by Crawford. Achieving personal health and proselytizing this value system moved beyond merely doing a job for this cadre of benevolent gatekeepers to become, for some, their life's mission.

A decade after Crawford effectively defined healthism as an individual pursuit, Petr Skrabanek placed healthism into a geopolitical context. In differentiating Crawford and Skrabanek's definitions, this dissertation refers to the idea of healthism with reference to Crawford's theoretical concept, while the term 'healthism project' references Skrabanek's political application of Crawford's theory. Skrabanek defined healthism as the state-mandated

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<sup>116</sup> *Conference on Future Direction in Health Care: The Dimensions of Medicine*. Sponsored by Blue Cross Association, The Rockefeller Foundation, and Health Policy Program, University of California, New York, (December 1975).

<sup>117</sup> Robert Crawford, "Healthism and the Medicalization of Everyday Life", *International Journal of Health Services*, 10:3 (July 1980) 265.

adherence to a narrowly defined view of what constitutes health. In his 1994 monograph, he wrote:

The pursuit of health is a symptom of unhealth. When this pursuit is no longer a personal yearning but a part of state ideology, *healthism* for short, it becomes a symptom of political sickness. Extreme versions of healthism provide a justification for racism, segregation and eugenic control since 'healthy' means patriotic, pure, while 'unhealthy' equals foreign, polluted. In the weak version of healthism, as encountered in Western democracies, the state goes beyond education and information on matters of health and uses propaganda and various forms of coercion to establish norms of a 'healthy lifestyle' for all. Human activities are divided into approved and disapproved, healthy and unhealthy, prescribed and proscribed, responsible and irresponsible.<sup>118</sup>

Skrabanek's indictment of government programs created to promote a healthy lifestyle suggests that the practice of state control of the body is as old as government itself and was among the policies employed by both Hitler<sup>119</sup> and Stalin.<sup>120</sup> Canada is not removed from this trend. As the writings of Mitchinson and Gear suggest, the interest of Canadian governments in the bodies of its citizens predates Confederation itself.<sup>121</sup>

### Conclusion

This dissertation will demonstrate that ParticipACTION was a project of healthism, executed by a cadre of benevolent gatekeepers who used persuasive social marketing to tell Canadians how they should live. While Skrabanek is quick to demonize those who took part in historical examples of healthism projects, this dissertation attempts to be more measured in its understanding of the motivations behind ParticipACTION's directors, presidents, employees, and supporters. Like many benevolent gatekeepers, these historical actors truly believed they

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<sup>118</sup> Petr Skrabanek, *Death of Humane Medicine: And the Rise of Coercive Healthism*, (Social Affairs Unit, 1994) 15.

<sup>119</sup> Skrabanek, 134.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>121</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, *The nature of their bodies: women and their doctors in Victorian Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991. Gear, James L. "Factors Influencing the Development of Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972." *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*. 4(2): 2-25, 1973.

were doing good work for their people and nation.<sup>122</sup> The clearest example of this blind adherence can be drawn from Russ Kisby's final wishes before his death in July of 2007. In lieu of flowers, Kisby requested that mourners make a donation in his name to "be followed by a brisk fitness walk".<sup>123</sup> Kisby's commitment to ParticipACTION's physical fitness message was not intentionally part of an enterprise to manipulate and harm Canadians. Creating what he believed to be a fitter nation was his life's work and a mission he considered even on his deathbed. This is a complicated narrative of political actors and contradictory assumptions regarding who should have the authority to dictate the fitness of a nation and who should have control of the bodies of Canadians.

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<sup>122</sup> Franca Iacovetta, Valerie J. Korinek, and Marlene Epp, *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History*, University of Toronto Press, (2012).

<sup>123</sup> "Russ Kisby", The University of Saskatchewan Alumni Association Achievement Awards, *Green and White* (Fall, 2008).

ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 2 – The Origin Story, The Cold War, and State Funding of Fitness (1971-1981)

I am forever proud to have been associated with the dedicated individuals who launched and ran ParticipACTION all those years. You helped us become better because of your being there.<sup>124</sup>

This chapter will endeavour to explain how ParticipACTION was founded, what purpose the agency was intended to serve, and discuss how the framing of this origin story has helped to shape what Canadians remember about this prolific national agency and how these perceptions may have shaped dominant social interpretations of healthy bodies and good citizenship.

The powerful role of myth-making and re-enforcement is well-trodden ground for sports studies scholars. Sport, in its performance, observation, customs, and ceremonies, can work as a powerful site of negotiated identity. As Don Morrow explains in his writing regarding the 1972 Summit Series, “I use myth as a concept to invoke the idea of a story of meaning, something that informs our sense of who we are as a culture, a set of truths about – in this case – Canadians.”<sup>125</sup> Trying to define something as complex and dynamic as national identity is a daunting task, but national sport sometimes offers a moment of collective experience when shared attributes and cultural values can be named. As this chapter outlines, ParticipACTION may not have been a sporting organization but its status as an agency encouraging physical activity squarely places it in the same arena of negotiated citizenship performed on the physical body. How Canadians mythologize ParticipACTION has as much to do with how Canadians perceive themselves as it does with those who crafted this national brand.

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<sup>124</sup> Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, “ParticipACTION: The Mouse That Roared, A Marketing and Health Communications Success Story” Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S4.

<sup>125</sup> Don Morrow, “The Mythic and the Mono-Mythic: Representations of the 1972 Canada vs. USSR Hockey Series”, *Canadian Issues / Themes Canadiens*, (Winter 2012) 57.

### The Post-War Preoccupation with Physical Fitness

Before discussing ParticipACTION's founding in 1971, it is important to understand that while ParticipACTION was innovative in its marketing and promotion of physical fitness, it was not created in a vacuum. The founding of ParticipACTION was the cumulative result of twenty years of government health theorizing. While federal government interest in public fitness stretched back to before Confederation,<sup>126</sup> the Second World War brought increased attention and media coverage of this constantly pressing national issue. In 1943, the *National Physical Fitness Act* was passed as part of a basket of services provided by the federal government in its growing role in social welfare. Under this act, each province was offered \$250 000 in matching funding to help support the development of physical education programming.<sup>127</sup> This grant program conveniently coincided with the creation of a string of physical education degree programs at Canada's major universities. The University of Toronto (1940), McGill (1945), UBC (1946), Queen's (1946) and the University of Western Ontario (1947) all answered the call to provide the physical education experts Canada 'needed' in the post-war period.<sup>128</sup> According to historian Mary Louise Adams, the immediate post-war period also marked the disarmament of a cadre of seasoned health professionals who then turned their gaze away from Canada's military forces and toward the Canadian public as a whole.<sup>129</sup> The apparent need for these experts' services was great, or at least it was constructed as such, as the conversation surrounding physical fitness was entirely couched in issues of national pride and security. A Division of Fitness was established in order to ensure that Canadian citizens became efficient employees,

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<sup>126</sup> Gear, 19.

<sup>127</sup> British North America Act, 1949 – Enactment No. 21, Section 40. <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/constitution/lawreg-loireg/pl1t213.html>

<sup>128</sup> Don Morrow, "Physical Education (Kinesiology)" *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/physical-education-kinesiology>

<sup>129</sup> Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality*, (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

healthy citizens, and ready and waiting soldiers.<sup>130</sup> Under the auspice of the federal Department of Health and Welfare, the Division of Fitness, in partnership with the Fitness Council, created a series of pamphlets concerning the acute need for regular exercise. The response from the public was a small but growing concern for the physical state of the nation.<sup>131</sup>

The growing consensus that Canadians were unfit received scientific validation with the publishing of the Kraus-Weber Tests results in 1954.<sup>132</sup> Using a rubric of five physical fitness indicators, Drs. Kraus and Weber of Columbia University tested a random sample of 5000 American and 5000 European children to measure how many could meet their stated benchmarks of fitness. The results of this national testing jumpstarted the moral panic regarding the health of American children. While 8% of European children were found wanting, this number paled in comparison to the 57% of American children who failed the test. The publicized results were shocking to an American public who increasingly sought out health professionals for answers and solutions. This type of national fitness testing was not conducted in Canada, but Canadian health activists quickly made the inference that what stands true for the United States mirrored Canadian's national health as well.<sup>133</sup> The Kraus-Weber Tests received extensive media coverage. Public awareness of a mounting crisis quickly became an entrenched truism built on trusted scientific studies and repeated at the highest levels by political and public figures.

The conflation of the 'field of sport' and the 'field of battle' in the Cold War has been well established and is arguably the clearest example of biocitizenship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup> The

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<sup>130</sup> James L. Gear, "Factors Influencing the Development of Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972", *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*. 4:2 (1973) 19.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> P.J. Galasso, "The Involvement of the Canadian Federal Government in Sport and Fitness", *Canadian Journal of History of Sports and Physical Education*, 3:24 (1972).

<sup>134</sup> Stephen Wagg and David Andrews, Ed. *East Pays West: Sport and the Cold War*, (Routledge, 2006). J.J. Wilson, "27 remarkable days: the 1972 summit series of ice hockey between Canada and the Soviet Union", *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions*, 5:2 (Autumn 2004) 271-280. The concept of 'biocitizenship' is drawn from



power of sport as a microcosm of societal conflict as well as a site for the reinforcement and testing of established social norms is currently being explored by a variety of interdisciplinary scholars. Sports studies scholars such as Bruce Kidd and Alan Metcalfe have been joined by kinesiologists specializing in health promotion such as Don Morrow and his colleagues at the International Centre for Olympic Studies (University of Western Ontario) in critically examining sport's interlocking role in Canadian politics, economics, and media development from 1807 forward.<sup>135</sup> Gender and race scholars such as Kevin Wamsley and Mary Louise Adams have delved into figure skating and boxing as important sites of negotiated masculinity and places of racial empowerment. International comparative scholars such as Andrew Holman have established that a country's perceived sports identity is inextricably linked to constructed national identity both at home and abroad.<sup>136</sup> This rich body of research suggests that sports cannot be discounted as apolitical leisure activities but rather powerful totems of nationalism, international political prowess, national economic health, and personal identity.

The 1960s marked a period of intense scrutiny of international sport as a perceived demonstration of a nation's power and capabilities. In this international atmosphere of heroic champions of national ideologies, Canada was floundering. For example, during the 1960, 1964,

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Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, "Biological Citizenship", Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds. *Global Anthropology*, (Blackwell, 2003), 4. In this work 'biocitizenship' has the following definition. "Projects of biological citizenship in the nineteenth and twentieth century produced citizens who understood their nationality, allegiances and distinctions, at least in part, in biological terms. They linked themselves to their fellow citizens and distinguished themselves from others, non-citizens, partly in biological terms. These biological senses of identification and affiliation made certain kinds of ethical demands possible: demands on oneself; on ones' kin, community, and society; on those who exercised authority." 4.

<sup>135</sup> Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Alan Metcalfe, *Canada learns to play: the emergence of organized sports, 1807-1914*, (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1987). Don Morrow, et al. *A Concise history of sport in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989). Don Morrow's colleagues at the Centre of Olympic Studies who have written in the field of sports history and social theory include Bob Barney, Karen Danylchuk, Janice Forsyth and Kevin Wamsley.

<sup>136</sup> Kevin B. Wamsley, "Celebrating Violent Masculinities: The Boxing Death of Luther McCarty, *Journal of Sport History*, (25:3, 419-431, 1998). Adams, Mary Louise, *Artistic Impressions: figure skating, masculinity, and the limits of sport*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). Andrew C. Holman, ed. *Canada's game: hockey and identity*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

and 1968 Olympics, Canada was unable to rank in the top twenty countries competing. This perceived failure was worsened by nine successive losses at the World Ice Hockey Championships during the decade.<sup>137</sup> The political value of sport was made overt by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker in a 1960 parliamentary debate:

In the field of sports today, there are tremendous dividends in national pride from some degree of success in athletics. The uncommitted countries of the world are now using these athletic contests as measurements of the evidence of the strength and power of the nations participating.<sup>138</sup>

The “uncommitted countries”, those with no clear allegiance to either the democratic West or to the Soviet Bloc were looking to international sport at an indicator of national strength and ideological staying power. Aware of this proxy war being waged on the ice rinks, baseball diamonds, and Olympic tracks of the world, committed countries such as the United States and the Soviet Union were actively emphasizing the value of sport among their citizenry. According to Diefenbaker, Canadian athletes and, by extension, the Canadian population from which they were recruited were not only letting down the country, but democracy, and even the free world. This relationship between international sporting performance and national success continues today with programs such as Own the Podium collecting from government and industry to meet these nationalistic objectives.<sup>139</sup> A year after Diefenbaker’s comments brought another federal act (*An Act to Encourage Fitness and Amateur Sports*) to solidify the pressing need for physical fitness programming.<sup>140</sup>

ParticipACTION was born into this political fray. The health promotion agency seemed an elegant solution to the created crisis in national health that was allegedly crippling Canada’s

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<sup>137</sup> Canada won the WIHC in 1961 only.

<sup>138</sup> Canada. Parliament. House of Commons, Debates: 1960-1961, Vol. 1 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1961), 39 as it appears in Gear, 22.

<sup>139</sup> <http://ownthepodium.org/About-OTP/Vision,-Mission,-and-Goals.aspx> (Accessed January 2, 2016).

<sup>140</sup> Richard Baka, “PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada”, (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1975) 4.

contribution to the Cold War ‘sports’ race. According to Charlotte Macdonald, while direct government funding of sports was framed as an unfair and sinisterly communist tactic, government funding of physical fitness could be justified as a shrewd political stopgap to the growing cost of national health care.<sup>141</sup> As one member of the Senate Task Force on Physical Fitness and Amateur Sport suggested:

There was an unspoken all-party attitude that it was essential to do something for Canadian sport, but that such action was politically risky unless fitness could be used as a cover. In other words, it was the righteous armour of fitness that provided the justification for the entry of government into the field of sport.<sup>142</sup>

ParticipACTION was created as a result of this task force and had a clear mandate to cultivate the physically fit population necessary to increase Canada’s standing in international sport. In this Cold War milieu, if physical fitness became the “righteous armour” of democratic warriors, ParticipACTION proved the struggle’s most covert war machine. For 29 years, this advertising agency reached into Canadian homes, schools, offices, and libraries to “educate, motivate, and mobilize.”<sup>143</sup> The success of the ParticipACTION brand in influencing public perceptions of health cannot easily be disputed, and like any successful child, many people stake claim to its parentage and formative development.

### Sources and Schisms

In investigating the many oral histories, archival records, and academic theses concerning ParticipACTION, four distinct narratives of the origin story began to take shape. This chapter discusses the origin stories of Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, Keith B. McKerracher, Richard Baka, and Russ Kisby. While these individuals represent the divergent origin stories, each account is supported by historical documents that corroborate and complicate each version.

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<sup>141</sup> Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: national Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*. University of British Columbia (2013) 63.

<sup>142</sup> W.H. Rea, et al. *Report of the Task Force on Sports for Canadians*, (1969) 16.

<sup>143</sup> Kisby’s Overview, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

These supportive documents include the four academic Master of Arts and Master of Sciences theses discussing the agency, government documents, and ParticipACTION commemorative documents including the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report produced in 1981.<sup>144</sup>

#### Version 1 – Gaspé Beaubien: the Well-Connected Media Mogul

It is most appropriate to begin with the origin story of the man who claims to be ParticipACTION's founder<sup>145</sup>, Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien. On October 13, 2012, Mr. Gaspé Beaubien agreed to be interviewed for this research project. The list of Gaspé Beaubien's accomplishments are long and distinguished: Mayor of Expo '67, founder of media conglomerate Telemedia, Officer of the Order of Canada, and former chair of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. Gaspé Beaubien began the interview by asking me a series of short, pointed questions beginning with one inquiry that caught me entirely off guard: "Who do you work for?"<sup>146</sup> Although Gaspé Beaubien's assistant had vetted all documentation regarding the validity of this study, its objectives, and ethics approval, Gaspé Beaubien had not apparently been privy to these details and was very much concerned as to why I was 'digging around' in ParticipACTION's past. I respectfully explained that my funding was exclusively provided by the Department of History and the College of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Saskatchewan, and that this study was driven by academic curiosity. This answer seemed unsatisfactory to Gaspé Beaubien. It took several minutes to reassure him that I did not work for

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<sup>144</sup> Kathy Ann Somerville, *Participaction Saskatoon: A Local Promotional Campaign for Physical Activity and Fitness*. (M.Sc. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1983). Alan J. McFarlane, *An Analysis of the Social Marketing of Physical Activity Promotion: The Comparative Case Study of ParticipACTION and Fitness Ontario*, (M. HK thesis, University of Windsor, 1994). R. Baka, *PARTICIPaction: an examination of its role in promoting physical fitness in Canada*. (M.A. thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1975). ParticipACTION, "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action*, (1981), MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>145</sup> This claim has been disputed by ParticipACTION's former president, Keith McKerracher. Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>146</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, November 13, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

the government, the media, or industry, nor was my funding directly channelled from any of these sectors. This preamble to the interview was telling. Gaspé Beaubien was a successful businessman who founded the once-largest media conglomerate in Quebec and he has spent his career effectively controlling the message. As an academic with no intentional bias or ulterior motive, my ‘angle’ was unclear and he seemed to find my position unsettling. Despite this initial discomfort, Gaspé Beaubien soon began to tell an intimately personal narrative of commitment and passion for physical fitness.

According to Gaspé Beaubien, the federal government began the Centennial Athletic Awards Program for Canadian Youth in the Expo year (1967) to encourage physical fitness among this important social demographic. The strategy of targeting youth has proven an exceptionally effective approach for health professionals looking to establish programming and entrench professional legitimacy. In her study of post-war concerns about the integration of large immigrant communities in Canada, Franca Iacovetta found that programs targeting youth were framed as particularly important. These children and young adults were perceived as a susceptible group in need of proper training and guidance since youth who were lacking in education or direction were a potential source of dangerous juvenile delinquency.<sup>147</sup> Placed in a transnational context of national health programming, Charlotte Macdonald has also suggested that in the interwar and post-war period, youth programming was the best point of access for health professionals wishing to influence policy and programming.<sup>148</sup> For his part, Gaspé Beaubien was supportive of the Youth Awards initiative but felt that more needed to be done to encourage all Canadians to become more physically fit. After Gaspé Beaubien’s duties with

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<sup>147</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 195.

<sup>148</sup> Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful, and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) 89.

Expo began to wind down, he approached his childhood friend, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, with an idea based on his personal passion for physical fitness and sport.<sup>149</sup> Gaspé Beaubien gathered an influential group of media and political elites to create a public service organization to promote the physical fitness message to Canadians. Chaired by Lester B. Pearson, Gaspé Beaubien sat as President with the initial board comprised of John Bassett, founder of Baton Broadcasting and owner of the Toronto Argonauts,<sup>150</sup> Donald G. Campbell, President of Maclean-Hunter Ltd.,<sup>151</sup> Senator E. Finley MacDonald, a founding director of CTV Television Network,<sup>152</sup> and Dal Bradhead, senior federal bureaucrat and project manager.<sup>153</sup> This ‘who’s who’ of Canadian business and politics lobbied the federal government to fund the ‘good cause’ of Canadian fitness. This narrative is supported by ParticipACTION’s early commemorative histories that place the initiative for ParticipACTION’s founding squarely on the conscientious corporate citizens who comprised the original board.<sup>154</sup> While these philanthropic corporate actors did not receive monetary compensation as members of ParticipACTION’s volunteer board, Iacovetta suggests that such benevolent reformers received the personal validation involved in the moral regulation and surveillance of those framed as potentially deviant.<sup>155</sup> This type of philanthropic act also worked as a moniker of social elevation in the bourgeois competition for peer validation as a good corporate citizen. In Gaspé Beaubien’s narrative, the

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<sup>149</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, November 13, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>150</sup> Kalyani Vittala, “John Bassett, 82; Controlled Canada TV Network”, New York Times, May 3, 1998. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/03/business/john-bassett-82-controlled-canada-tv-network.html> (Accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>151</sup> Donald Graham Campbell Obituary, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/thestar/obituary.aspx?n=donald-graham-campbell&pid=122091815>, (Accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>152</sup> ATC Obituary E. Finlay MacDonald, <https://www.ogs.on.ca/ogspi/2005/o2005atv.htm> (Accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>153</sup> New Economy Development Group, [http://www.neweconomygroup.ca/team\\_brodhead\\_e.html](http://www.neweconomygroup.ca/team_brodhead_e.html) (Accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>154</sup> Peggy Edwards, *ParticipACTION: Catalyst for a Healthier Lifestyle*, ParticipACTION Campaign Collection, MG 291-2004-41 (5), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>155</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 19.

role of the federal government is significantly less than that of private citizens in the initiation of ParticipACTION.

### Version 2 – Richard Baka: the Academic on the Ground

Complicating this philanthropic depiction of the agency's founding is the 1968 federal Fitness and Amateur Sport Study, commissioned by Minister of Health and Welfare John Munro and conducted by P.S. Ross and Partners.<sup>156</sup> Among the report's findings was a call for the creation of "an agency that is charged with the responsibility of the leisure time of all Canadians in both a direct and coordinative function."<sup>157</sup> With reference to Skrabanek, one could not ask for a clearer mandate for the creation of a healthism project. Here was a taskforce charged by government with the surveillance of Canadians in their personal lives.<sup>158</sup> Responding to the report's recommendations, the National Department of Health and Welfare launched an experimental social marketing agency, independent of the federal government yet government-funded, which would work to decrease health care costs by selling Canadians on the benefits of physical activity.<sup>159</sup>

This view of ParticipACTION as a government pilot project is heavily supported by the academic theses written separately by K.A. Somerville and Richard Baka. Somerville's narrative of ParticipACTION's pre-history depended heavily on the writings of J. L. Gear who emphasized the previous quantitative studies in physical fitness rates that worked to support the need for government involvement in physical fitness programming.<sup>160</sup> Somerville's discussion of

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<sup>156</sup> P.S. & Ross Partners, *Fitness and Amateur Sports Study Proposal*, Mimeograph, Note, 2. p. 32 Section IX as appearing in K.A. Somerville, *ParticipACTION Saskatoon: A Local Promotional Campaign for Physical Activity and Fitness*, (M.Kin., University of Saskatchewan, 1983).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Petr Skrabanek, *Death of Humane Medicine: And the Rise of Coercive Healthism*, (Social Affairs Unit, 1994) 15.

<sup>159</sup> K.A. Somerville, 10.

<sup>160</sup> James L. Gear, "Factors Influencing the Development of Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972." *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*. 4:2 (1973) 2-25.

ParticipACTION's origin focuses on the Senate Taskforce and subsequent government initiation of the program.

Completed only four years after ParticipACTION's founding, Baka's study depended heavily on available government documents and several personal interviews with important ParticipACTION stakeholders such as Keith McKerracher (President, 1972-1978) and Russ Kisby (President, 1978-2000).<sup>161</sup> Having spent a great deal of time at the Toronto office of ParticipACTION, Baka had the unique opportunity to observe and record the history of ParticipACTION's early days. By all accounts, Baka's thesis was created before the underlying values of the ParticipACTION brand were entrenched and many of the rough edges of the origin story had yet to be chipped away. This is not to say that Baka's version of the creation story is the 'truest'; rather, Baka's thesis reveals several aspects of ParticipACTION's founding that have been strategically omitted by later revisionist histories because these parts of the story no longer fit within the carefully crafted dominant social memory of this organization.<sup>162</sup>

These rough edges prominently take three forms. First, interviewees unapologetically discussed the intended Cold War benefits of this vein of public programming. Second, there was admission of the blatant attempt by government to convey this message through a seemingly arms-length organization with the goal of keeping the state's role in ParticipACTION hidden from the Canadian population. Third, there was overt discussion of intended behaviour

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<sup>161</sup> R. Baka, *PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada*, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Western Ontario, (1975) 44. \*Keith McKerracher was originally brought on as Director General of ParticipACTION, while Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien initially occupied the position of President in a more ceremonial capacity. After the death of Chairman Lester B. Pearson in 1972, Gaspé Beaubien assumed the position of Chairman and the position of 'Director General' was renamed 'President' in order to better align with current practices in the business community.

<sup>162</sup> The conception of dominant social memory is drawn from Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and The First World War*, (University of British Columbia Press, 1997) 9. Vance prefers the concept of social memory to that of collective or individual memory. Vance stated that social memory, is "any society's conception of the past" and that "The dominant memory emerges after a struggle between conflicting interpretations of historical events and comes to act as a bulwark for the social or political order on the grounds that it was ordained by history."



modification and the justified commodification of physical fitness by a semi-public body. For instance, while later versions of the creation story discussed ParticipACTION's role in promoting "public awareness"<sup>163</sup>, Baka's oral interviews are entirely blunt regarding the organization's marketing objectives. According to an interview conducted with President McKerracher in 1973,

PARTICIPaction [sic] is trying to sell fitness...the same way you sell beer and soft drinks...How else but through the arts of advertising are you going to make sweating popular?<sup>164</sup>

The clear commodification of health as a component of the origin story is significantly downplayed in all later ParticipACTION advertising and promotional material. This softening in marketing tone can be largely attributed to the departure of Keith McKerracher in 1978. In fact, if the roughed out image of ParticipACTION had a physical embodiment, that person would be Keith McKerracher.

### Version 3 – Keith McKerracher: the Marketing Genius

Recruited by Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien in the spring of 1972 to act as Director General of ParticipACTION, the former Carling Beer advertising executive was a well-known "marketing genius"<sup>165</sup> in the business community. McKerracher viewed physical fitness like any other product, and this marketing approach was approved by the Board of Directors and ParticipACTION staff, almost all of whom were drawn from the business and media communities.<sup>166</sup> McKerracher's business-like marketing approach was hugely successful with the Canadian public and with the media industry, and ParticipACTION's first full year of

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<sup>163</sup> ParticipACTION, "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action, 1981*. MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>164</sup> Baka, 133.

<sup>165</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>166</sup> Kisby and Bailey remained the outliers to this group, both coming from a background of physical education.

operation is but one example. In 1972-73, the federal government renewed and increased ParticipACTION's annual grant through the Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate to \$300 000.<sup>167</sup> With this grant, McKerracher and his small team generated \$3 127 000 in donated media exposure.<sup>168</sup> The return on investment was over tenfold, a ratio that continued to grow annually under McKerracher's leadership. With such a successful launch largely attributable to McKerracher's business model, the question bears asking: why does McKerracher's name not appear more prominently in ParticipACTION's commemorative histories or on the ParticipACTION Archive Project website? He is rarely mentioned by any sources, whether written or oral. The reasons for McKerracher's removal from these commemorative records comes down to tone, approach, and polish. Keith McKerracher and his forthright approach to what ParticipACTION was really trying to achieve simply did not fit into the professional and positive image that later incarnations of ParticipACTION were trying to convey.

McKerracher's tactics, although highly successful with the Canadian public and media, did not correspond with ParticipACTION's later vision and marketing approach. In 1972, the Canadian Football League offered ParticipACTION an advertising donation to run in the 1973 CFL season. The CFL requested a 15-second advertisement to be featured on both English and French language stations that would appear at the end of the half-time break during six televised games over the course of the season. Citing a book draft by Dr. Roy Shephard at the University of Toronto that suggested, among other comparative international findings, "*some* Swedish men

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<sup>167</sup> "ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)", Kisby's Overviews, 52, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

at age sixty had the same fitness level as *some* Canadian men at age thirty”,<sup>169</sup> the

ParticipACTION team put together the following ad:

[Focus on two sets of legs jogging along a well-worn wooded path, one in red pants, the other in blue.]

**Voice over:** These men are about evenly matched.

[Cut to the runners’ faces. First a thirty-year-old Canadian man in red track suit with an average build who is working hard to keep pace with his running mate. Then cut to a white haired and bearded Swedish man in his 60s wearing a blue track suit smiling as he effortlessly runs along.]

**Voice over:** That’s because the average 30-year-old Canadian is at about the same physical shape as the average 60-year-old Swede.

[Pan out to full view of men running on the path]

**Voice over:** Run, Walk, Cycle. Let’s Get Canada Moving Again!<sup>170</sup>

The ad was short and to the point. It employed binary logic<sup>171</sup> – unfit vs. fit, ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, red vs. blue, young vs. old, the North American way of life vs. the European way of life – and then ended with the presentation of a solution to this constructed national crisis:

ParticipACTION. That the central comparison was, at best, loosely based on the massaged results of one scientific study and, at worst, an outright fabrication, seemed unimportant to the Canadian public. It was memorable. Prime Minister Trudeau mentioned the “Swede ad” in the House of Commons, and the “Swede comparison” became a frequent cocktail party topic across

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<sup>169</sup> Peggy Edwards, “No Country Mouse: Thirty Years of Effective Marketing and Health Communication”, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Canadian Public Health Associate special supplement on ParticipACTION, 95 Supplement 2, 2004. S11. Emphasis added by the researcher.

<sup>170</sup> “60 year-old-Swede”, *The ParticipACTION Archive Project* website. University of Saskatchewan, *Early Years (1973-1979)- The 60 year old Swede*. Accessed December 14, 2012  
<http://www.usask.ca/archives/participaction/english/motivate/swede.html>

<sup>171</sup> Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*, (University of Toronto Press, 2000) 20.

the country.<sup>172</sup> The ‘60-year-old Swede’ quickly became the poster-child for ParticipACTION and, by extension, the Canadian physical fitness crisis.

Although the 60-year-old Swede was a highly successful advertisement that still holds currency with the Canadian public forty years after its launch, the ad encountered significant criticism from the physical education and health services communities. According to both Russ Kisby<sup>173</sup> and Don Bailey<sup>174</sup>, the 60-year-old Swede and ParticipACTION in those initial years were not well liked by these experts. As Richard Baka discovered, “detractors of Participaction’s [sic] sixty year old Swede slogan are legion,”<sup>175</sup> including prominent Canadian fitness celebrity Lloyd Percival who stated, “there’s no way they can back up the statement in that ad.”<sup>176</sup> In truth, the claim in the Swede ad could not be substantiated. The advertisement employed shock advertising and overt nationalism. Although effective with the Canadian public, the health expert community was outraged.<sup>177</sup> This type of shock advertising was not a tactic sanctioned by gatekeepers aspiring for professional legitimacy. As Franca Iacovetta’s interview with Canadian citizenship branch employee Vladimir Kaye revealed, “change of culture, change of his whole behaviour to a new system of values... Change best took place not by ‘coaxing of pressure,’ but by friendly advice and invitation.”<sup>178</sup> ParticipACTION’s persuasion was to be based in the authority of the government-sanctioned professionals, not the slick massaging of meaning by media spin-doctors. The unsupportable claims of the Swede message worked to undermine the

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<sup>172</sup> Baka, 170.

<sup>173</sup> Russ Kisby, “President Russ Kisby discusses the early criticism ParticipACTION received for its methods.” December 2003. ParticipACTION Archive Project, <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/motivate/theearlyyears.html>

<sup>174</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>175</sup> Baka, 143.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>178</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 58.

credibility of the academic community's approach to change the physical fitness of the nation.<sup>179</sup>

It seemed that selling fitness to the public was much easier for McKerracher than pleasing the industry that he was working to promote.

In an oral history interview for this study, former ParticipACTION Director of Media Relations Catherine Fauquier described the environment in those earlier years. While McKerracher was personally brash and difficult to work with, “there was an excitement”<sup>180</sup> surrounding ParticipACTION and its advertisements that must be attributed to McKerracher's marketing knowledge and leadership.<sup>181</sup> Upon joining ParticipACTION, McKerracher quickly learned that television and radio stations were being inundated with hundreds of public service announcement (PSA) requests. These PSA requests were often poorly written mimeographed letters that asked local stations to write the script, produce the ad, and report back to the requesting organization the number of times the advertisement was shown. McKerracher realized that ParticipACTION could easily rise to the top of this pile of requests by employing simple marketing techniques. Using Toronto-based radio firm Listen Audio, ParticipACTION developed its own radio advertisements for the reduced cost of \$500 per ad.<sup>182</sup> These ads were mass-produced so that radio stations had a variety of choices. Rather than an impersonal letter with stamped signature, these advertisement recordings were delivered by one of two young and often attractive staff persons who worked to develop a personal rapport with the station owners and producers. These hand-delivered, professionally produced radio commercials were welcomed by radio stations and listeners alike as this strategy proved a potent trifecta of

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<sup>179</sup> This consensus among Canada's physical fitness experts has been independently reported by Baka, Kisby, and Bailey.

<sup>180</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

advertising savvy: the messages were entertaining and fun, the process was easy and hassle free, and the people were personable and attractive.<sup>183</sup> McKerracher remembers one instance in 1977 when ParticipACTION received a request from a radio station in PEI.<sup>184</sup> ParticipACTION ads were so popular at this particular station that listeners were calling in making requests for their favourite ParticipACTION ad. Responding to this interest, the station requested ParticipACTION's entire advertising collection and produced a 'best-of' show for its listeners.<sup>185</sup>

Television employed a similar cost-saving business model. McKerracher's Montreal Vice-President, Jacques Gravel, arranged for ParticipACTION television ads to be shot by professional television crews when weather or other delays caused production downtime for other clients. This strategy created professional-quality products at a fraction of the cost.<sup>186</sup> According to McKerracher, these types of creative tactics allowed ParticipACTION to punch above its weight as an advertising client.

By 1976 it was our estimate that ParticipACTION had become the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> largest advertiser in Canada, and we didn't spend a cent buying space or time.<sup>187</sup>

The success of McKerracher's business model and marketing approach is difficult to dispute, but his emphasis on selling fitness through high pressure messaging only loosely based in fact simply did not meet the expectations of the academic physical fitness community.

#### Version 4 – Russ Kisby: "The Heart of ParticipACTION"<sup>188</sup>

The physical fitness advocates that created ParticipACTION looked for a marketing agency to 'get the message out' for the dozens of federal, provincial, municipal and private

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<sup>183</sup> McKerracher, corroborated by Catherine Fauquier.

<sup>184</sup> McKerracher.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Roger Duval, September 27, 2012 9:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

physical fitness organizations in Canada. They wanted effective marketing but did not appreciate the tactics employed by a marketing expert. In a sense, these physical fitness reformers wanted to find a treatment for the perceived lethargy of Canadians but McKerracher's marketing cure left a bad taste in their collective mouths. As a result, few examples remain of McKerracher's early campaigns because they did not fit into the later constructed image of ParticipACTION as an upbeat, positive, and motivating fitness brand. This fact only adds to the historical value of the Richard Baka study as it offers several examples of campaigns not housed in the ParticipACTION Archives or featured on the ParticipACTION Archives Project website. These include many ads produced for ParticipACTION by Listen Audio and written by Terry O'Malley's team at Vickers & Benson. Examples of this work include slogans such as, "Join the Canadian minority group: The Fit", "The True North ~~Strong~~ Weak and Free" and "In Europe they call us 'Canada Fats' ".<sup>189</sup> The use of nationalism is clear in all of these advertisements, as is the overt suggestion that Canadians who were not partaking in physical activity were letting down the nation. ParticipACTION's staff admitted that these ads were intended to "shock Canadians" but even if the messages "hurt", people realized they were probably "true".<sup>190</sup> The tone of these campaigns are far more critical than later ParticipACTION programming which feature seemingly benign motivating messages like, "Keep Fit and Have Fun!" or "Grab on to the Good Times!"<sup>191</sup> It is not surprising that in an archive built by Russ Kisby, these earlier advertisements were significantly downplayed or dropped altogether. They simply did not fit within his vision of ParticipACTION's values. The exception to the rule is, of course, the 60-year-old Swede. This McKerracher campaign alone persists as part of the origin story of

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<sup>189</sup> Baka, 145.

<sup>190</sup> Baka, 145, C. Cooke, A Conversation with R. Baka, September 27, 1974. And T. MacMillan in Conversation with the Author, December 18, 1974.

<sup>191</sup> Body Break campaign slogan, 1989. Vitality campaign slogan, 1991. *The ParticipACTION Archive Project* website. University of Saskatchewan, Accessed December 14, 2012.

ParticipACTION because it was far too well known to be omitted from the historical record. This advertisement has remained in ParticipACTION's dominant social memory because of its continued cultural cachet with Canadians who are now fifty years and older.

In many ways, the interpretation of ParticipACTION's origin story comes down to competing visions of what ParticipACTION should become. For Keith McKerracher, physical fitness was a commodity that needed to be sold to Canadians in the most effective way possible. If this meant shocking Canadians with catchy messages that fed on Cold War anxiety and national boosterism, then so be it. While McKerracher's campaigns used a variety of coercive marketing tactics to achieve ParticipACTION's goals, the underlying objectives of this work was refreshingly honest and transparent in its intent. As a marketing expert, McKerracher valued different success indicators than the industry he was promoting. Success was not measured in bodies changed or individuals persuaded but in the concrete numbers of television viewership reached and print markets saturated. As McKerracher stated in a 1974 address, "I'm a peddler and my product is exercise."<sup>192</sup>

Competing against this transparent coercion and edgier messaging was the vision of ParticipACTION espoused by Russ Kisby that effectively downplayed its intended behaviour modification agenda in favour of a gentler and more positive marketing approach. In a 2003 interview, Kisby noted, "Our style [at ParticipACTION] is to be a little more entertaining... to candy-coat the message".<sup>193</sup> In the battle of these competing visions of ParticipACTION, it is clear that Kisby's approach won the day as his vision embodies the dominant social memory of this organization. Drawing on the Phase 2 interviews conducted with ParticipACTION participants, Canadians overwhelmingly remember the ParticipACTION that Kisby honed during

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<sup>192</sup> K. McKerracher, Presentation given at the CAHPEP National Convention, June 1, 1974.

<sup>193</sup> "Interview with Russ Kisby", *ParticipACTION Archives Project*, December 2003.



the 1980s and 1990s, while McKerracher's forthright manipulation in the 1970s is all but forgotten.<sup>194</sup>

The transition between these two competing visions was not without controversy. Don Bailey, who spent more than twenty-five years on ParticipACTION's national board, liked and worked equally well with both McKerracher and Kisby. According to Bailey's account, in 1978 McKerracher was quietly removed from the post of President under a cloud of suspicion about inappropriate travel expenses. Coming from the world of academia, Bailey, the self-described "token jockstrap", was shocked at how quickly the board went about removing the President.<sup>195</sup> "I thought it was ruthless, within 15 minutes they had agreed on severance and he was gone."<sup>196</sup> The damning expenses had been uncovered by Toronto-based Vice-President, Russ Kisby, who thereafter assumed the post of President.<sup>197</sup> Given McKerracher's misalignment with the tactical consensus of fitness experts, it is not surprising that a reason was found for his departure. A less forgiving reader might suggest a coup d'état ingenuously orchestrated by the ambitious Kisby.<sup>198</sup>

According to McKerracher, he had agreed to work for ParticipACTION in 1972 under the understanding that he would continue to take on other clients within his consulting firm. By 1978, with two of his four daughters in college, McKerracher felt that ParticipACTION was taking up too much time and not paying him enough. When he approached the board regarding a salary increase, he was let go.<sup>199</sup> In his written narrative and email correspondence, McKerracher

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<sup>194</sup> Lamb Drover, Victoria. Oral Interviews with Phase II participants, September 10 – October 2, 2012 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*, corroborated by anecdotal evidence from conversations with Canadians regarding this research project.

<sup>195</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>196</sup> Bailey.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> There is no citable evidence to support this theory, although two separate oral histories did allude to Kisby's integral role in McKerracher's dismissal. This suggestion is based on these discussions.

<sup>199</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*. Contacted for an oral interview, McKerracher preferred to provide his own

expressed his sadness regarding his omission from the many commemorative histories and anniversary press pieces about ParticipACTION.<sup>200</sup> His name appears rarely in the three areas of the ParticipACTION Archives. Although McKerracher's campaigns, innovative marketing strategies, and successful business model are extolled in Kisby's Overviews, they were never credited to McKerracher himself. These innovations are always credited to the organization as a whole and use the passive voice. For instance, in one overview discussing the PSA Campaigns, the overview states: "ParticipACTION was able to have high quality, contemporary advertisements professionally prepared."<sup>201</sup> Reading the silences, it becomes clear that Russ Kisby used the passive voice and corporate name to effectively eliminate McKerracher from the official ParticipACTION archives and history.<sup>202</sup> It is difficult to gauge whether this omission was intentional or merely the subconscious performance of Kisby and McKerracher's strained relationship, but regardless of the intent, the result remains the same. McKerracher's name has been effectively buried or removed from ParticipACTION's dominant origin story.

While much concerning the early years of ParticipACTION remains open to interpretation, this much cannot be disputed: under McKerracher's leadership, Sports Participation Canada became ParticipACTION. It was McKerracher who used his marketing connections to persuade Wolfgang Letzin and Stan Libera to design the iconic logo for free. And it was McKerracher who produced the iconic 60-year-old Swede ad. Even the business model of producing low-cost ads for use in donated television and radio airtime was McKerracher's idea.

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narrative of his involvement with ParticipACTION rather than be asked the questions approved by the Beh Research Ethics Board.

<sup>200</sup> McKerracher, 12.

<sup>201</sup> "Background to Mass media PSA Campaigns", Kisby's Overviews, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>202</sup> P. Singh, "Reading the silences within critical feminist theory." in P. Reebbody, S. Muspratt & A. Luke, eds. *Constructing critical literacies*, (New York: Hampton Press. 1997) 77-94.

Under the direction of Russ Kisby, ParticipACTION post-1978 continued with this name, logo, and business model, but assumed the humorous, positive, and inspirational persona often cited in Canadians' recollection of the brand. While the rough edges of overt marketing, Cold War motivations, and government involvement were gradually chipped away from the public image of ParticipACTION, these tactics, motivations, and intentions were still there, just more effectively hidden.

### Government Involvement Downplayed

While the government funding of ParticipACTION was clear, the actual relationship has proven far more complicated to define. According to Mr. Gaspé Beaubien, ParticipACTION was a private philanthropic initiative funded through both public grants and private sponsorship. On the other hand, government documents such as the report by the Senate Task Force on Physical Fitness and Amateur Sport state ParticipACTION was a public initiative purposefully kept outside the federal government structure. The desire to keep ParticipACTION at arms length from the government proved beneficial to all parties involved. The board members and employees of the organization framed their work as a philanthropic public initiative removed from the somewhat suspect oversight of government, while federal officials sidestepped accusations of direct funding of professional sports, or conversely, of coercively manipulating the behaviour of Canadians to reduce health care costs.<sup>203</sup> With this in mind, ParticipACTION stands as a tangible example of Nikolas Rose's 'neo-liberal governance' in action.<sup>204</sup> Rose argues that beginning in the 1960s western democratic governments waged marketing campaigns using

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<sup>203</sup> The Minister of Amateur Sport was established in 1957 and underwent several reiterations during the duration of ParticipACTION tenure. Only in 2003, under Prime Minister Paul Martin, was 'amateur' removed from the portfolio heading. Government of Canada - Ministers and Responsibilities.

<http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/ParlInfo/Compilations/FederalGovernment/MinistersResponsible.aspx?Language=E&Ministry=&Responsibility=a2570370-d959-47aa-b082-1516492eb99b> (Accessed March 22, 2016)

<sup>204</sup> Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, "Biological Citizenship", Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds. *Global Anthropology*, (Blackwell, 2003) 4.

soft-power and persuasive messaging to inculcate a set of prescriptive neo-liberal values within their respective nations. Examples include anti-smoking campaigns, promotion of seat-belt use, and school health films demonstrating acceptable heteronormative sexuality. Rose suggests that after a period of forty years of prescriptive messaging, these sanctioned behaviours and values have become ‘normalized’. As an unintended result, organizations such as ParticipACTION that once transmitted these messages are no longer needed. Citizens now police themselves through a system of exclusion and shaming with little financial support or sustained encouragement from government. It proved a stroke of social marketing genius yet this balancing act required constant attention and adjustment in order to remain relevant.

In the wake of the Watergate Scandal in the United States, Canadians became acutely aware of the need to critically read government prescriptive messaging.<sup>205</sup> While Canadians may have been leery of public service announcements from the Government of Canada, few would have been alarmed by a series of upbeat and benign cartoons discussing walking, jogging, and cycling presented by a public service group. One of the main reasons given for the changing of Sports Participation Canada’s name to ParticipACTION was that the original name sounded a great deal like other recently established federal bodies such as Sport Canada and Recreation Canada. Thus, the desire to distance Sports Participation Canada from the federal government required a drastic divergence from the standard government name format.<sup>206</sup> Kisby explained the relationship thusly:

We are fortunate to have the standing support of the federal government’s Fitness and Amateur Sport Branch. We’ve only been able to do so much because the branch has given us the independence and mobility that come with sponsorship

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<sup>205</sup> Kenneth Gibbons and Donald C. Rowat, Ed. *Political Corruption in Canada: Cases, Causes and Cures*, Carleton University, McClelland and Steward Ltd. (1976) vii.

<sup>206</sup> Baka, 123

without control. It has put us in business and kept us in business, but has left business to us.<sup>207</sup>

This relationship remained purposefully ambiguous for the Canadian public and was effectively engrained in the dominant social memory of ParticipACTION while successfully becoming part of the organization's national brand.

### The Cold War Sports Race and ParticipACTION

As explained by Russ Kisby, "Implicit in our mandate and in our practical aims is the idea, not just of getting individuals fit, but of building a fit nation."<sup>208</sup> This nationalist rhetoric proved a highly effective marketing tool: appealing to individual Canadians to perform their patriotism through physical activity, pressuring the federal government to continue its annual grant to the agency, and encouraging sponsors to act as good corporate citizens by supporting ParticipACTION. References to Canadian nationalism became a mainstay of ParticipACTION advertising from its creation well into the 1990s.

As pervasive as ParticipACTION's national advertising was, key to the effective internalizing of ParticipACTION's messaging was the creation of private memories as part of local campaigns. And nationalism was just as easily imparted as healthism through this medium. One event, the 1975 'Great Ga Lunka Lop / Run, Walk, Jog' in Saskatoon, is a particularly good example. It was a fitness challenge against Umea, a city of comparable population size in Sweden. As part of the build-up to this event, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon offered weekly prizes to Saskatoon citizens who reported their physical activities. These 'Achievement Week Award Winners' were presented with a ParticipACTION hat and t-shirt as well as having their name

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<sup>207</sup> ParticipACTION, "Moving Mountains", *PARTICIPACTION's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action*, 1981. MG 291-2004-41 (14), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>208</sup> ParticipACTION, "A Fit Nation", *PARTICIPACTION's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report, 1971-1981 A Decade of Action*, 1981. MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

listed in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* newspaper.<sup>209</sup> I contacted some of the Achievement Week Winners to discuss their memories of ParticipACTION and their views on physical fitness. While the memories of each individual varied significantly, some commonalities proved insightful. The respondents vaguely remembered their personal win and prize, but the more substantive memory and the one they could speak to with the most passion and detail was the Great Ga Lunka Lop itself. None could remember the name of the city in Sweden and most had indeed forgotten the name of the competing country. What remained a salient rump of their experience was the conviction that they had “beat” the “Europeans” or indeed in one respondent’s recollection, the “Soviets”.<sup>210</sup> This conflation of memory between the Swedish nation and the Soviet Bloc, although historically inaccurate, speaks to the unconscious link that Canadians may have made between the messaging in the 60-year-old Swede advertisement and Canada’s physical fitness/sport contribution to the Cold War cause. That the Achievement Week Awards and the Great Ga Lunka Lop / Run, Walk, Jog came on the heels of the 1972 Summit Series may have also contributed to this melding of national sentiment and personal memory during the height of Cold War anxiety.<sup>211</sup>

The political power of international sporting competitions has long been appreciated and observed by the Canadian government. In his seminal history, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, Bruce Kidd suggested that the Canadian state has always been involved in national sports; this involvement became codified in legislation after 1961. According to Kidd,

The federal government, through the Fitness and Amateur Sports Act of 1961, directs, finances, and controls Canadian preparation and participation in

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<sup>209</sup> *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, March 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 1974. Clipping Books 1-31, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> Don Morrow, “The Mythic and the Mono-Mythic: Representations of the 1972 Canada vs. USSR Hockey Series, *Canadian Issues / Themes Canadiens*, (Winter 2012): 52-60.

international competition, largely in the interest of reinforcing and publicizing Canadian identity and ‘the ideology of excellence’.<sup>212</sup>

Kidd was not the first to suggest the mutually beneficial relationship between national sport and government; J.L. Gear made the link between the political utility of national sports and security in 1973. During the South African War, the First World War, and the Second World War, the government constructed physical fitness as essential to national security. In other words, ‘we must become a fit nation in order to effectively fight the ...[fill in your current enemy here]’. During times of relative peace, the central issue of security remained but shifted to a discussion of an internal menace plaguing Canadian society. For instance, during the interwar period, government messaging constructed the need for economic security as vital in the fight against fiscal decline. In other words, ‘we must become a fit nation in order to become better workers, and effectively fight the Great Depression.’ Kisby also drew on this rhetoric in one of his justifications for ParticipACTION. “A fit nation... enjoys the familiar institutional and societal benefits of fitness, things like decreased public health expenditures and increasing productivity.”<sup>213</sup> Throughout both times of war and peace, finding a common enemy against whom to rally seems key to this continuing socially constructed need for government programming in physical fitness.<sup>214</sup> This common enemy and justification during the 1960s and 1970s was the ever-looming threat of the Cold War.

While the origin story of Richard Baka written in 1975 makes the direct link between Cold War anxiety and the need for ParticipACTION, McKerracher’s, Kisby’s, and Gaspé Beaubien’s more recently created origin stories do not. This aspect of the dominant social

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<sup>212</sup> Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, (University of Toronto Press, 1996) 5.

<sup>213</sup> “A Fit Nation”, *PARTICIPACTION’s 10 Anniversary Report, 1971–1981 A Decade of Action* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 1981), 7. ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>214</sup> Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: national Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*. University of British Columbia (2013) 63.

memory and origin story of ParticipACTION has fallen by the wayside because it no longer serves a tangible purpose and works to undermine the upbeat, benign, and friendly persona developed for ParticipACTION by Russ Kisby after 1978. While this national anxiety remained, as the 1981 Anniversary Report indicated, the Cold War was replaced by overt nation-building rhetoric that emphasized individual Canadians' responsibility to perform their patriotism through a pursuit and maintenance of a physically fit body.

### Conclusion

Gaspé Beaubien, McKerracher, Kisby, and Baka provide exceptionally divergent narratives of how and why ParticipACTION came to be. The role of the Government of Canada in initiating the corporation, the personal motivations of those involved, and the intended outcome of ParticipACTION's programming are all points of contention that cannot be definitively resolved. ParticipACTION's origin story has shifted over time to support the evolving branding of the organization. The commodification of health, ParticipACTION's behaviour-modifying intentions, and the intrinsic connections to the federal government have been consciously removed from ParticipACTION's historical narrative to support its marketing objectives.



ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 3 – PARTICIPaction Saskatoon: A Case Study in convergent memories (1972-1981)

Practices of the self are not invented by subjects themselves but rather are ‘proposed, suggested and imposed’ on them by one’s culture, society and social group. As the reach of the state is extended (but not by force), good citizens become partners in the governance of their own affairs and their own bodies.<sup>215</sup>

Situating ParticipACTION (1971-1979)

Between 1972 and 1978, Keith McKerracher oversaw ParticipACTION’s rise as a public not-for-profit advertiser. McKerracher and his Vice-President, Jacques Gravel, were based in the Montreal head office first established by Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien at the agency’s founding. In the spring of 1972, McKerracher hired a young Russ Kisby, a fitness organizer who was “doing great things”<sup>216</sup> for the YMCA. While ParticipACTION’s mandate appealed to Kisby, he asked if he could remain in Toronto and establish another ParticipACTION office in the city where his family was settled. From 1972 to 1978, the two offices worked relatively independently with Kisby as Vice-President and National Coordinator heading the media outreach team of Tom MacMillan and Catherine Fauquier in the Toronto office, and President Keith McKerracher leading the media generation team of Vice-President of Creative Advertising Jacques Gravel and Quebec Provincial Coordinator J.C. Dutton in the Montreal office.<sup>217</sup> The Montreal team came to Toronto every 2 to 3 weeks to discuss long-term strategy and address housekeeping matters.<sup>218</sup> These six individuals represented the entirety of the professional staff with one or two secretaries hired for both offices. They were responsible for the 60-year-old

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<sup>215</sup> Kathleen LeBesco, “Neoliberalism, public health, and the moral peril of fatness”, *Critical Public Health*, (December 22, 2010) 155.

<sup>216</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 11:30 EST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>217</sup> Richard Baka, *PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada*, (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1975) 33.

<sup>218</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

Swede, the popular Listen Audio radio spots, and numerous posters and cartoons found in over 250 local and national papers across Canada. During these years, ParticipACTION's dedicated operating grant from the Department of Health and Welfare ranged between \$262 000 in the 1971-1972 fiscal year to \$500 000 in 1978-1979.<sup>219</sup> After McKerracher's departure in 1978, the Toronto office became the de facto head office, with the Montreal office retained for the remaining staff. During those initial years of experimentation, McKerracher asked Kisby to find and establish a ParticipACTION test community. Like a marketing test group, Kisby's selected a community that allowed McKerracher and his Montreal creative team to better tailor their strategies and campaigns to become more effective at inculcating ParticipACTION's fitness message to a national audience.

#### Good Citizens Partnering in Governance<sup>220</sup>

This chapter stands as a case study of ParticipACTION's first test community and a group of 'good citizens' who partnered in the governance of their neighbours and their bodies. As Tamara Myers has explained in her examination of Miles for Millions Charity Walkathon during the 1960s and 1970s, these types of community-based collective physical activities gained tremendous momentum and social capital. The demonstrations were "powerful symbols in Cold War transnational imaginings" putting on display traits such as "able-bodiedness, pluck and determination among Canadian youth".<sup>221</sup> The ability of Canada to win the Cold War was on display in the streets of the nation. In Saskatoon, between 1972 and 1981, a small force of influential volunteers spearheaded a series of social marketing campaigns and physical fitness events to increase public awareness and physical activity. It was a community initiative that

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<sup>219</sup> Kisby's Overviews, MG 291 2004-4, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>220</sup> Kathleen LeBesco, "Neoliberalism, public health, and the moral peril of fatness", *Critical Public Health*, (December 22, 2010) 155.

<sup>221</sup> Tamara Myers, 'Local Action and Global Imagining: Youth, International Development, and the Walkathon Phenomenon in Sixties' and Seventies' Canada, *Diplomatic History*, 38:2 (2014) 283.

included the active support of municipal and provincial governments, local TV, radio, and newspapers, the corporate community, the University of Saskatchewan, SIAAS (Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Arts and Sciences)<sup>222</sup>, both public and Catholic school divisions, and the local health region. This chapter will explore this nearly decade-long initiative and the people who made it happen. It also examines why this demonstration community project is significantly downplayed in the dominant social memory of ParticipACTION and how patriotism became a critical component of this sustained project of coercion.

In many ways, Chapter 3 offers yet another origin story. While the previous accounts have focused on the narratives of authorities and national agents of change, this chapter uncovers the origin story of the volunteers, organizers, participants, and employees of ParticipACTION's first Demonstration Community: PARTICIPaction Saskatoon.<sup>223</sup> The Saskatoon case study demonstrates the power of volunteers as institutional gatekeepers inculcating their friends and neighbours into a healthism project through strategically targeted peer pressure and personal persuasion. These agents, while well intentioned in their efforts, also received the non-monetary rewards of social elevation and moral authority over those they purported to help.<sup>224</sup> The efforts of these local volunteers and national professionals created a potent combination of prescriptive

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<sup>222</sup> This institution was absorbed into a centralized provincial college now known as Saskatchewan Polytechnic on January 1, 1988.

[http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/saskatchewan\\_institute\\_of\\_applied\\_science\\_and\\_technology\\_siast.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/saskatchewan_institute_of_applied_science_and_technology_siast.html)

<sup>223</sup> In 1983, Kathy Ann Somerville employed the derivation "PARTICIPaction" to describe the national organization in her Master of Science in Physical Education thesis. The use of this version of the name was drawn from notes written by Russ Kisby that have been subsequently lost in the University of Saskatchewan Physical Education building demolition of 1998. Somerville's study of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon is the only substantial remaining written record of this organization and, as such, her version of the name will be employed when referring to the Saskatoon Demonstration Community.

It should be noted that there is similar inconsistency in the spelling of the national organization's name. It has been alternatively spelled Participaction, ParticipACTION, PARTICIPaction, and PARTICIPACTION, sometimes by the same person over time.

<sup>224</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 49-50.

messages that addressed the performance of one's citizenship and to one's hometown spirit in adopting ParticipACTION's healthism values.

### Oral Histories and Other Sources

In the fall of 2012, I conducted oral history interviews with eleven individuals in the Saskatoon area who had personal recollections of the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon Demonstration Community project. These interviews included former Board Members and organizers Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, Henrietta Goplen, Jim Struthers, Don Bailey, and Tom McClocklin. Adding to these interviews are the recollections of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon Animator and Executive Director Barb Hodges (nee Van Meenan), as well as the memories of four Achievement Week winners, Dale Zakreski, Dennis Smith, Gail Jones, and Jack Langille. Following the process approved in the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Application for this study, all 42 individuals identified as PARTICIPaction Saskatoon Achievement Week winners featured in the March 1<sup>st</sup> to March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1974, editions of the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*<sup>225</sup> were sent a Letter of Invitation (Appendix 1) to consider participating in this history of ParticipACTION. Nearly forty years later, the response rate was expectantly low, with only 17% reporting.<sup>226</sup> Of the seven respondents, three were parents of the now-adult Achievement Week winners; two of these three winners had died. One of these parents happened to also be PARTICIPaction Saskatoon organizer Henrietta Goplen. In the process of contacting these Achievement Week winners, another early organizer, Tom McClocklin was also inadvertently contacted as his daughter, Susan, was among the winners of the ParticipACTION hat and t-shirt prize. It is not surprising that individuals heavily involved in a local fitness initiative had encouraged their

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<sup>225</sup> Clipping Books, MG 291-2004-41 ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>226</sup> Seven candidates out of 42 names published in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* from March 1 to March 23, 1974 volunteered to be interviewed. Lamb Drover, Victoria. Oral Interviews with Phase II participants, September 10 – October 2, 2012 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

children to participate, but fortunately for this study, this serendipitous intersection of Phase 1 (Organizers) and Phase 2 (Participants) interview candidates facilitated two exceptionally valuable interviews with local organizers that otherwise may have been overlooked due to the absence of primary written records revealing their names.

Complementing these local oral interviews are the many examples of newspaper event advertisements found in the Clipping Collection of the ParticipACTION Archives as well as the narratives provided by Russ Kisby through the ParticipACTION Archives Project and Keith McKerracher through his written account composed for this study. In preparation for the launch of the ParticipACTION Archives in 2004, Don Bailey also prepared a detailed PowerPoint presentation outlining the many events organized by PARTICIPaction Saskatoon with visual aids pulled from the Clipping Collection of the Archives.<sup>227</sup>

### The Importance of Somerville

No source of information on PARTICIPaction Saskatoon has proven as detailed as K.A. Somerville's 1983 thesis due in large part to its many references and analyses of materials that were lost when the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon records were destroyed. In the early 1980s, when PARTICIPaction Saskatoon folded, Henrietta Goplen gathered all records regarding this internationally recognized project to preserve its history for future use. She donated the collection to the College of Physical Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Somerville's thesis depended heavily on this collection which was eventually deposited in the College's Student Lounge and was lost when the building was deemed structurally unsafe and abruptly

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<sup>227</sup> Don Bailey, "Looking Back in Time: Health Promotion in Saskatoon 30 Years Ago", ParticipACTION Archives Project, 2004. <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/mobilize/ParSask.html>, Accessed Nov. 4, 2104.

demolished in 1997.<sup>228</sup> The loss of these documents has had a significant impact on the recorded history of this local physical fitness initiative as well as the perceptions of the value of surviving volunteers' work and their legacy.

Deepening the silence surrounding PARTICIPaction Saskatoon is the fact that Somerville's conclusions complicate the dominant social memory of ParticipACTION by providing clear evidence that ParticipACTION's national social marketing tactics did not result in quantifiably significant change in the long-term physical activity of Canadians. The results led, either intentionally or otherwise, to the omission of her research from current official narratives as they weakened the position of ParticipACTION. Like Baka's, Somerville's thesis is critical to revealing a now-forgotten period in ParticipACTION's unpolished formative years. Unfortunately for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the findings of K.A. Somerville's quantitative study likely did more to undermine the initiative's place in the official narrative than the destruction of the records.

### Why Saskatoon?

In the Spring of 1972, Russ Kisby, the newly hired National Coordinator of ParticipACTION met with the Mayor of Saskatoon, Herbert (Bert) Sears, to propose the city of Saskatoon as ParticipACTION's first demonstration community.<sup>229</sup> According to both Keith McKerracher and Don Bailey, McKerracher wanted to create a demonstration community to act as a petri dish for ParticipACTION's social marketing initiatives.<sup>230</sup> Rather than roll out experimental campaigns on the national level, they preferred to test various forms of promotions

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<sup>228</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Henrietta Gopen, September 21, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*. Why this collection was housed in a student lounge and not donated to the University Archives has not been answered by any oral interviewees.

<sup>229</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. *Minutes of Meeting*, September 19, 1972. as it appears in Somerville, 26.

<sup>230</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion* and Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

and activities on a local level and build up nationally. According to Russ Kisby, the desire to create a demonstration community was also spurred by concerns among the national board members who believed that unless ParticipACTION could quickly prove itself as an effective agent of behavioural change, the federal funding for the agency would soon dry up.<sup>231</sup> Kisby suggested that if a community could be saturated with the ParticipACTION message, then the process of adoption could be hastened, resulting in timely, positive, and quantifiable results for presentation to the federal government.<sup>232</sup>

Kisby selected Saskatoon as the demonstration community for a number of reasons. The year previously, Saskatoon had hosted the successful 1971 Canada Games and already had in place a group of individuals who were passionate about physical fitness and sport.<sup>233</sup> Much like the professional gatekeepers outlined by Franca Iacovetta in her study of post-war immigration, these individuals were “eager to shape just what kind of citizens these men, women and children would be”<sup>234</sup>. Their performance in the Canada Games proved their adherence to the cause and that they had the political clout and status to achieve what Russ Kisby and ParticipACTION were hoping for Saskatoon.

From a marketing perspective, Saskatoon had a relatively isolated media landscape and received almost all programming from the two local television stations and one local newspaper. Consumers of Saskatoon media had no choice but to hear, see, and read advertising about ParticipACTION in local media outlets. At just over 90 000 individuals, Saskatoon was of

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<sup>231</sup> Russ Kisby, “Russ Kisby discusses the creation of the Saskatoon Community Project”, ParticipACTION Archives Project, August 2004.<http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/mobilize/ParSask.html>

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Henrietta Goplen, September 21, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>234</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 49-50.

comparable size to many small cities in Canada.<sup>235</sup> According to K.A. Somerville, one of the leading reasons cited by Canadians for choosing to not partake in physical activity was the cold weather. Saskatoon's climate included a harsh winter, so if ParticipACTION succeeded in Saskatoon, it was presumed to be clear evidence that it could work anywhere in Canada.<sup>236</sup> And, perhaps the most important factor cited by all was that Saskatoon was Russ Kisby's hometown.

As National Coordinator, the Demonstration Community project fell neatly under Kisby's purview, and Saskatoon presented a well-known cast of actors. With the support of Mayor Sears, Saskatoon City Council passed a motion on March 27, 1972, to accept ParticipACTION's invitation to become the first Demonstration Community in Canada.<sup>237</sup> The original name was the Mayor's "Special Committee for PARTICIPaction"<sup>238</sup> and included sixteen individuals interviewed and personally invited by Russ Kisby to sit on the Board of Directors.<sup>239</sup> The recruitment process was consciously created by the astute Kisby. By framing this organization as exclusive, Kisby recruited influential community members who felt a sense of privilege and social elevation by their inclusion.<sup>240</sup> Beginning in July of 1972, Kisby had arranged for himself and his family to live in Saskatoon for the summer so that he could have first-hand involvement in establishing the initiative. Kisby received no financial help from the national organization to find a place to live, rent office space, or set up the local initiative.<sup>241</sup> This lack of funding for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was a conscious decision by the national

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<sup>235</sup> Census of Canada, Statistics Canada Demography Division, Table 8, Saskatchewan Quarterly Population, 1971 to 2014. <http://stats.gov.sk.ca/pop/stats/population/pop2.pdf>

<sup>236</sup> R. Kisby, *Saskatoon –Canada's First Demonstration Community for ParticipAction*. Mimeograph, June, 1972. as it appears in Somerville, 52.

<sup>237</sup> Don Bailey, "Looking Back in Time: Health Promotion in Saskatoon 30 Years Ago", ParticipACTION Archives Project, 2004. <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participation/english/mobilize/ParSask.html>

<sup>238</sup> Somerville, 5.

<sup>239</sup> Lamb Drover, Victoria, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Merle Kisby, October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.



organization and strongly defended by Russ Kisby. If PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was to succeed as microcosm of the national movement, they must operate under the same financial restraints. This meant that there was no funding for advertising, a dependence on corporate donations, and a reliance on a volunteer workforce. The uncompromising desire to rely on volunteers and stand removed from direct government oversight spoke to the importance of grassroots legitimacy. Bruce Kidd highlighted the value of amateurism or volunteerism in his investigation of national sporting agencies in finding that the more professional an agency was perceived to be, the less likely it was able to link to nationalism or develop a sense of personal connection with Canadians.<sup>242</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon remained unfunded by the national body and run by volunteers so that the people of Saskatoon did not feel dictated to but encouraged by their peers in a showing of city pride and support.

From the prospective of the national Board of Directors, these preconditions were established on the understanding held by the federal government, Gaspé Beaubien, and McKerracher that the federal grant was intended as ‘seed money’ for the national social marketing agency and, once established, ParticipACTION would no longer count on annual support from the federal government. As will be further explored in chapter 6, this position shifted over time to a point where ParticipACTION’s very survival was determined by the level of funding the federal government continued to provide. In 1972, there was consensus among the national agents that it was a matter of when, not if, the federal seed funding would end. Thus, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon had to prove itself viable without funding provided by the national ParticipACTION organization. As a result, Kisby had to depend heavily on his personal connections and local resources to ensure the project could be accomplished. After giving a

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<sup>242</sup> Bruce Kidd, *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists and Socialists: Shaping Canadian Sport in the 1920’s and 1930’s*, (PhD diss., York University, 1990) iv.

spirited address at the SIAAS campus in the spring of 1972, the institute offered Kisby temporary office space.<sup>243</sup> Kisby's passion for the ParticipACTION message was contagious, and many people in Saskatoon donated their time and resources on account of Kisby's persuasiveness.

The first meeting of the initial Board of Directors focused on legal incorporation, the adoption of the official name PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the outlining of a corporate structure, and the unanimous appointment of respected sports physician Dr. Sam Landa as the society's chairman.<sup>244</sup> The second meeting centred around on the philosophical objectives of this new local society. PARTICIPaction Saskatoon decided it was most appropriate to adopt a variation of the national objectives: "To promote fitness in a family-oriented [sic] manner and to promote the utilization of facilities and activity groups already existing within the community."<sup>245</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon set up events to promote physical activity, but they did not want to organize sustained groups such as sporting teams or fitness clubs. They were simply in the business of health promotion through the advertising of pre-existing facilities and organizations, a stance that mirrored the national organization's singular objective during this period of social marketing. This alignment between national and local efforts, facilitated by 'embedding' Kisby in the community, formed the bedrock of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's success in developing personal peer pressure framed in a national context that worked towards the adoption of ParticipACTION's messaging.

#### Struthers, the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, and Humour

The most influential member of the board was *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* editor Jim Struthers. He successfully gathered the managers of all major local media outlets including

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<sup>243</sup> A. McKenzie, *Personal Communication to I.J. Wilson*, June 27, 1972. as found in Somerville, 52.

<sup>244</sup> Somerville, 51.

<sup>245</sup> Somerville, 52.

Robert Hosie at CKOM radio, Greg Barnsley and Denis Fisher at CFQC-CTV, and Lloyd Saunders at CBC-CBKST.<sup>246</sup> In an oral interview for this study, Jim Struthers described his proposal to this group of local media powers as entirely unheard of in the newspaper, radio, or television industries. He suggested that he donate a number of full-page advertisements to PARTICIPaction Saskatoon and challenged his peers to do the same.<sup>247</sup> Each of them rose to the occasion and, in the spring of 1973, Saskatoon quickly encountered an intense barrage of media messaging for the local fitness promotion society. The *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* featured full page, poster-sized advertisements with cartoons of Saskatonians failing to meet the physical fitness challenge.



248

<sup>246</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Jim Struthers, September 11, 2012 4:30 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Clipping Collection, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

The ads were humorous in image and blunt in script, exactly McKerracher's style of marketing successfully rolled out at the national level. Surrounding each cartoon featured a variation of the slogan; "Canadians are... UNFIT!", "Canadians are... UNFIRST", "Saskatonians are... UNAWARE", and "Saskatonians are... UNUSUAL!"<sup>249</sup> These messages played on anxieties that one's body was not meeting the civic duty or patriotic need of one's peer group. They employed binary marketing depicting inactivity against activity, sloth and gluttony against wholesome living and good citizenship. These subtexts were hidden beneath an upbeat and funny cartoon that disarmed the audience. Radio and television employed similar tactics. The local radio station featured a series of "Ladies' Choice" programs hosted by PARTICIPaction Board member Dr. Pat Lawson of the University of Saskatchewan who answered questions from callers about women's fitness and health.<sup>250</sup> Unfortunately, no content from these radio shows survives, but it appears from interviews with surviving board members that these radio shows marked the extent of Lawson's participation.<sup>251</sup> In television, both stations ran news stories about physical fitness and local events on a daily basis. In an interview for this study, Dr. and Mrs. Nixon described this flood of media coverage as a healthy competition of one-upmanship in a group that Mrs. Nixon described as an "old boys club".<sup>252</sup> This competition was a display of white, upper-middle-class masculinity where the demonstration of power lay in how much time and space one was able to donate. They all wanted to outdo one another and the end result was a tremendous amount of sustained free media coverage for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. In the

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Somerville, 57.

<sup>251</sup> Lawson is not included in any recollection of social gatherings, public events, or other stories associated with PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. In a group dominated by men, her only assigned task was to conduct this limited women's programming.

<sup>252</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

1970s, all but the CBC were owned by small family-run or employee-run media companies.<sup>253</sup>

These small companies granted a great deal of power to their local managers in making programming and advertising decisions, a divesting of power that greatly benefitted PARTICIPaction Saskatoon.

### A Social Movement born in Saskatoon

The recollections of Struthers, Mrs. Nixon, and others underscore the sense of ownership members of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon felt for the later success of the national ParticipACTION brand. According to Struthers, it was his newspaper and the complementary coverage provided by the local Saskatoon media that first introduced humour into ParticipACTION advertising. Speaking to the quality of the men in the industry at the time, Mr. Struthers said: “The talent that was here... we were the ones who brought the levity to the whole thing.”<sup>254</sup> According to Mr. Struthers, Russ Kisby recognized the value of humour in ParticipACTION advertising and brought that concept back to the executives at the national level. Mr. Struthers became a sitting member of the national ParticipACTION Board of Directors and advanced this advertising strategy which later became a mainstay of the ParticipACTION brand and dominant memory. This sense of ownership for ParticipACTION’s national success is an audible undercurrent in the oral histories of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon organizers.

While the government documents clearly indicate that ParticipACTION was founded in Montreal using federal funds, all but two of the organizers interviewed for the Saskatoon case

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<sup>253</sup> CFQC was owned by A.A. Murphy and Son Ltd.; the *StarPhoenix* was owned by the Sifton Family company, Armadale Corporation; and CKOM radio was owned by a small group of local men, most of whom were the station’s employees and were headed by manager Robert Hosie under the name Saskatoon Community Broadcasting Co. “CFQC-DT” Television Station History, Canadian Communications Foundation, [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/listings\\_and\\_histories/television/histories.php%3Fid%3D96%26historyID%3D74](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/listings_and_histories/television/histories.php%3Fid%3D96%26historyID%3D74)

<sup>254</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Jim Struthers, September 11, 2012 4:30 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

study adamantly claimed that ParticipACTION was born “here” in Saskatoon. This belief was substantiated by press headlines at the time that read, “Saskatoon starts ParticipAction”<sup>255</sup>.



256

The only two interviewees to complicate this local origin story are, not surprisingly, Dr. Don Bailey and Mrs. Barbara Hodges. While Bailey was involved with the local organization, he was also a member of the national board and had a longer association with the ParticipACTION brand and corporation than any of the local PARTICIPaction Saskatoon organizers. Although he recognized why the local organizers feel this sense of ownership, he does not support the notion. As for Barbara Hodges, the young Executive Director of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon (1977-1979) worked closely with Russ Kisby and from her earliest involvement was aware of the national nature of the ParticipACTION venture. As part of the on-the-job training for her term contract, Hodges went on a cross-Canada tour of ParticipACTION initiatives and physical fitness

<sup>255</sup> “Saskatoon starts ParticipAction”, *Edmonton Journal*, Tuesday, June 5, 1973. Clipping Collection, ParticipACTION Archives. “Sifton Family”, *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, [http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/sifton\\_family.html](http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/sifton_family.html), “CKOM-AM” *Radio Station History*, *Canadian Communications Foundation*, [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/listings\\_and\\_histories/radio/histories.php%3Fid%3D254%26historyID%3D751](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A//www.broadcasting-history.ca/listings_and_histories/radio/histories.php%3Fid%3D254%26historyID%3D751).

<sup>256</sup> “Saskatoon starts ParticipAction”, Clipping Collections, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

programming, guided by Kisby.<sup>257</sup> This national tour and close working relationship with Kisby offered Hodges a better appreciation for the national scope of the ParticipACTION agency.<sup>258</sup> She did not advance the sentiment that PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was the birthplace for the national ParticipACTION brand. As an employee coordinating with both the local volunteer board and the national offices, Hodges' history comes from a different perspective than the local organizers. Despite these differences, Mrs. Hodges nonetheless expressed concern and sadness about the absence of recognition for the successes of the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon project, and she still believed that the work done in Saskatoon was significant, positive, and not sufficiently remembered in the history of this organization.<sup>259</sup> In Hodges' mind, the process of crafting the current dominant memory of ParticipACTION had erased actively the human element, community pride, and volunteer activism within the local context. Her private memory of disappointment and regret, and that of many PARTICIPaction Saskatoon organizers, runs counter to the polished positive ParticipACTION brand.

The contradictory accounts of Bailey and Hodges are not intended to undercut the beliefs among local organizers and volunteers regarding ParticipACTION's origin. The 'birth' of a social movement is often more difficult to pinpoint than the rather clear-cut founding of a government agency or pilot project. To the people who organized PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, it was a social movement to which they were wholeheartedly devoted. In their minds, while the

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<sup>257</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Jim Struthers, October 2, 2012 9:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>258</sup> Lamb Drover, Victoria, Oral Interview with Barb Hodges, October 2, 2012 9:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*. Barb also enjoyed working with Kisby who also happened to be her childhood swim coach.

<sup>259</sup> In conveying her sentiments, Ms. Hodges recounted her unsavoury experience as an alumna of the St. George School in Saskatoon and the crafting of that institution's history for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012. Despite her many fond memories of her mother's volunteerism at the school, she felt the official memorialization only depicted the school as being in an inner city slum with Gordie Howe the only graduate worth mentioning. Lamb Drover, Victoria, Oral Interview with Barb Hodges, October 2, 2012 9:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

government created the framework, it was the people of Saskatoon that embodied ParticipACTION.

### Early PARTICIPaction Saskatoon Events

Several events were held between 1973 and 1981 that demonstrated this devotion and explains this strong sense of ownership among the local volunteers. The first, the February 5, 1973, Block Walk, asked Saskatonians to take a walk around the block at 7:30pm that evening. Thanks to every potential agency of authority being tapped to aid the cause – tremendous media-lead-up, students canvassing neighbourhoods with door-to-door reminders, and local churches, fire halls, and police stations announcing the start of the walk – the event can be considered a great success in community activation. According to volunteer estimates, “over 80% of the population of Saskatoon walked around the block in -34°C weather with a wind of 32 kilometres per hour”.<sup>260</sup> The turnout demonstrated a tremendous level of dedication that encouraged all within the ParticipACTION organization.

This event was followed a month later with the Walk Around the World. Each citizen of Saskatoon was challenged to walk one mile on the evening of March 19, 1973. People were then asked after their walk to go to the nearest school and register their distance. The set goal was for Saskatoon to walk 24,901.55 miles, or the earth’s circumference, in a single evening. This walk required a great deal of coordination, as both school divisions had to ensure all schools remained open and staffed to record the results. Every school received ParticipACTION stickers to hand out, courtesy of the Bank of Montreal. At the end of the evening, Saskatoon had reportedly walked 61,189 miles or 2½ times the earth’s circumference, an average of 2.4 miles per participant.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Somerville, 59.

<sup>261</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. *Co-ordinator’s Report*, March 30, 1973, as recorded in Somerville, 59.



In the wake of these events, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon recorded several groups around the city adopting the PARTICIPaction philosophy and creating fitness events of their own volition. St. Ann's Nursing Home and the Sherbrooke Centre for seniors responded to their patients' calls for senior fitness programs. Staff of St. Paul's Hospital Intensive Care Unit began a program to encourage people to take the stairs at work.

During the remainder of the spring, ParticipACTION engaged in demographically targeted programming. On May 25, 1973, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon and the College of Physical Education at the University of Saskatchewan held The Fitness Fun Day for Females<sup>262</sup> where 150 women attended fitness seminars and viewed displays by the Saskatoon Canoe Club, the Saskatoon Water Ski Club, the Saskatoon Cycling Club, the YWCA, and the Parks and Recreation Department.<sup>263</sup> June brought the Father's Day Fitnic<sup>264</sup> that encouraged Saskatonians to enjoy any of the city swimming pools, parks, or Forestry Farm free of charge on Father's Day.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1973, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon events remained a constant in the city's newspaper, radio, and television coverage. The local agency created a two-stage process. Stage 1 called for this heightened level of media exposure.<sup>265</sup> After a continuous and sustained presence in the local media and culture, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon expected its message would become effectively entrenched in the collective culture of the city. Once this goal was achieved, Stage 2 shifted focus from media coverage and promotion to actively encouraging Saskatonians to adopt a healthier lifestyle. The national ParticipACTION organization later adopted this two-step process of (Stage 1) "branding and motivating" to (Stage 2) "mobilizing"

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Somerville, 62. The obvious gendered nature of this programming will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

<sup>264</sup> "Father's Day 'Fitnic' set", Saskatoon StarPhoenix, June 16, 1973. Clipping Collections, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>265</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon organizers referred to the two-stage process as "Phase 1" and "Phase 2". These designations have been changes to Stage 1 and Stage 2 in order to minimize confusion with this study's two groups of oral interviews.

and was fully embraced by Russ Kisby in his overviews of ParticipACTION programs and their efficacy as presented in the ParticipACTION Archives. The language used in this healthism project holds many similarities to military recruitment advertisements, “mobilizing” being the most obvious reference. In both cases, the performance of one’s patriotism is overtly demanded, and the process began with an awareness campaign based in the establishment of a ‘need’. In these earliest events, ParticipACTION’s local supporters established this need and couched it in loyalty to one’s city and nation.

### Project Sweden

The organizers of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon wanted to continue building on the previous successes but were not entirely sure where to turn next.<sup>266</sup> The idea of a “walk to the moon”<sup>267</sup> was suggested but was quickly discarded when a more marketable idea came before the board. At the time, the CFL had just introduced the 60-year-old Swede ad, so the Board of Directors settled on a rematch of sorts: to challenge a Swedish city of comparable size and demographic make-up to a fitness competition. The Saskatoon vs. Umea Great Ga Lunka Lop / Run, Walk, Jog of 1975 became the local organization’s most notable event. The citizens of each city would record their physical activity in one-hour increments over a three-day period (May 12-14, 1975). The cities announced their tallies each day, and the city with the highest cumulative score on the third day was declared the winner. For over a year, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon worked to promote this prestigious international event. Schools in both cities were twinned, orchestras exchanged, and visits by national ambassadors arranged. With constant progress updates being broadcast by CFQC<sup>268</sup>, Saskatonians came out in record numbers to win

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<sup>266</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ned Powers, *Saskatoon: The Powers Interviews*, (Thistle-down Press, 2006) 19.

by a slim margin of 2% with an average of 41.8% of its citizens exercising for at least one hour each day over the 3-day period.<sup>269</sup> While a participation rate of 40% represents a significant accomplishment for the people of Saskatoon, it was the efforts of the organizing committee and media support that played the greatest role in this victory. Umea did not participate in the warm-up challenges, and the lack of media coordination largely accounted for their narrow loss in the competition. The legacy of the challenge remains today in Saskatoon where 100 donated Swedish birch trees still line Umea Park on Primrose Drive.<sup>270</sup>

#### Achievement Week (March 18-23, 1974)

The first event held in the build-up to the Great Ga Lunka Lop / Run, Walk, Jog was ‘Achievement Week’ in March of 1974. Saskatonians cut out the registration form in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* then pledge a specific level of activity over the course of the week. The completed forms then needed to be delivered to one of a number of drop boxes located in shopping malls and parks throughout the city. The process proved arduous, and many people did not bother completing or submitting the forms.<sup>271</sup> Those who did complete the process had their name entered to win a ParticipACTION hat and t-shirt and have their name printed in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* as Achievement Week winners.<sup>272</sup> As mentioned earlier, seven of the original list of 42 winners responded to the study’s Letter of Invitation. Of these, four expressed a desire to speak about their Achievement Week win. All spoke of their involvement in ParticipACTION’s programming with pride, a sense of belonging, and nostalgia.<sup>273</sup> The four respondents expressed very similar opinions regarding their Achievement Week win and their

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<sup>269</sup> Somerville, 71.

<sup>270</sup> 100 Saskatoon Berry bushes were sent in exchange for this Birch Tree donation. Lamb Drover, Victoria, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>271</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>272</sup> These named individuals formed the basis for the Phase 2 (Participants) interviews for this study.

<sup>273</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interviews with Phase II participants, September 10 – October 2, 2012 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

views of ParticipACTION and physical fitness. For Gail Jones, the Achievement Week award took on particular significance because it was a project that she had undertaken with her father. As the fourth of five children, the one-on-one time this project facilitated between herself and her father made the experience all the more important for the young Jones. While all remembered the pledge form and prize, none could remember the name of the city in Sweden or, in fact, the country itself. What remained an important aspect of their memories was the sense of victory over the now-forgotten European competitor. When asked whether they felt ParticipACTION was a worthwhile program to continue, all strongly agreed that it was still exceptionally important in today's society, with three citing the obesity crisis among children as a particularly tangible justification for ParticipACTION's continuation. For these respondents, local programming helped to inculcate ParticipACTION's message, and their feelings regarding ParticipACTION were infused with a sense of patriotic accomplishment and proper national representation.

Probing these values further, I asked the four winners whether or not they believed ParticipACTION had significantly changed their personal views and behaviours concerning physical fitness. The responses were all negative. They each believed that they were already adhering to a physically fit lifestyle prior to their Achievement Week win and that they had maintained a healthy lifestyle regardless of ParticipACTION. In delving into these answers, it must be remembered that these four respondents cannot be considered a representative sample of the Canadian population or even of Achievement Week winners. Regardless of this caveat, the unanimous disconnect between the perceived societal benefit of a public physical fitness program and their personal adherence to the values espoused by this prescriptive programming is instructive in evaluating the depth of ParticipACTION's messaging on individual Canadians.

### Failure to Inculcate or Covertly Internalize

These individuals may have internalized ParticipACTION's message so completely that they did not recognize the performance of these beliefs in their personal lives. That three of the four cited the current obesity crisis indicates a degree of media susceptibility that could easily lend itself to ParticipACTION's mission of behaviour modification. The responses of these Achievement Week winners acted as anecdotal evidence of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's success. On the other hand, if one assumes that these participants were unaffected by ParticipACTION messaging, this failure to effectively inculcate individual Canadians, even in a group as pro-ParticipACTION as the Phase 2 respondents, acts as supportive evidence to the underlying weakness in ParticipACTION's marketing strategy to cultivate the behaviour modification described in their national mission statement. If Canadians believed that ParticipACTION's messaging was for other people, not themselves, then Stage 2 (Mobilize) of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's local and ParticipACTION's national strategy was unachievable. Neither organization had the ability to effectively mobilize a population that had not personally internalized the prescribed need to become a physically fit citizen.<sup>274</sup>

### Women in PARTICIPaction Saskatoon

PARTICIPaction Saskatoon established a call centre staffed by organizers and volunteers and housed at the CFQC station during the build-up to the Saskatoon vs. Umea challenge. Henrietta Goplen remembers working the phones was sought after because of the entertaining stories people told about their hour of activity. The call centre also welcomed drop-in pledges. Many of the organizers remember and spoke at length regarding one drop-in pledge personally handled by Goplen. While almost all of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's Board of Directors and

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<sup>274</sup> Somerville's thesis supports this second vein of thinking and suggests PARTICIPaction Saskatoon had not effected long-term change in the behavioural choices of the people of Saskatoon, despite its success in promoting the brand.

organizers were professionals and all were middle-class and white, it has been corroborated by Goplen, Hodges, and Bailey, that the group recognized the need to create a welcoming and inclusive social environment in their activities, advertising, and PARTICIPlace office space. One morning during The Great Ga Lunka Lop, a young woman came in to the office seeking advice about activities that may be counted as her hour of physical activity. Goplen asked the young woman what she did for a living. The woman stated that she worked at the Ritz Hotel. Goplen replied, “Well, cleaning rooms and changing beds is hard work. If you walk to work and back, we could definitely count that as a hour of exercise.” The woman responded shyly that she worked the night shift. This detail did not deter Goplen who proceeded to register the young woman. As Goplen later described, “Howie Nixon and the lot of them were killing themselves behind me.” They had quickly realized the young woman was a sex-worker, a fact that had completely escaped Goplen. After registering the woman, Dr. Nixon jokingly teased Goplen that she would do anything to win, so “Sexercise”<sup>275</sup> was thereafter unofficially added to the list of sanctioned physical activities in the challenge.

This instance demonstrates the camaraderie and fun these board members and volunteers experienced together. It also speaks to the gendered nature of this volunteer workforce. Of the sixteen original board members, only two were women, and both Sylvia Fedoruk and Patricia Lawson were faculty representatives from the University of Saskatchewan who also happened to be accomplished athletes and respected scholars. Although an official member of the board, the interviewees did not mention Fedoruk in their recollections of the organization or in any discussion of local events. Lawson’s radio show marks her only mention in this history as well. Henrietta Goplen, although identified by all (Phase 1) interviewees as a key organizer, was not a

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<sup>275</sup> Account corroborated by Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Henrietta Goplen, September 21, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*, and Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

member of the initial board, but rather of the promotional subcommittee. Unlike Lawson and Fedoruk, Goplen was not a member of a traditional professional occupation, working as a speed skating coach in Saskatoon. Like many of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's volunteers, Goplen received the non-monetary benefits and networking opportunities as payment for her service. During the 1980s and 1990s, Goplen became President of Speed Skating Canada and was one of the founding members of the Saskatoon Hall of Fame. Goplen was inducted into the Order of Canada in 2003. In justifying her nomination PARTICIPaction Saskatoon came second only to her career with Speed Skating Canada. Her volunteerism with the local pilot project was cited as evidence of her commitment to "promote the importance of healthy lifestyle through physical activity".<sup>276</sup> While Goplen received no payment from PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the non-monetary benefits of Goplen's 1970s volunteerism and the cachet of the ParticipACTION brand continued to benefit Goplen decades after the project folded.

The presence of Goplen on the promotional committee, as well as Lawson and Fedoruk on the initial board, may suggest a kind of female tokenism emblematic of volunteer and corporate boards in the 1970s and 1980s. But despite this potential, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon demonstrated an awareness of the practical barriers to fitness for women and created family-friendly events or, conversely, the advertising of free baby-sitting services provided at programs not deemed appropriate for children. There was an awareness of the need to create tailored programming for multiple demographic groups (seniors, children, men, and women) and an active involvement in all programs by both male and female volunteers. As suggested by Charlotte Macdonald in her exploration of fitness and beauty competitions in the interwar and post-war period, sport or the physical display of gendered bodies often worked to enforce

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<sup>276</sup> <http://archive.gg.ca/honours/search-recherche/honours-desc.asp?lang=e&TypeID=orc&id=7987> (Accessed October 7, 2015).

established socio-economic and gender boundaries.<sup>277</sup> That PARTICIPaction Saskatoon offered demographically targeted programming reveals an underlying desire to ensure that none were left behind in the entrenchment of ParticipACTION's conception of fitness.<sup>278</sup>

### The Role of Women in Paid and Unpaid Labour Environments

In contrast to the relatively inclusive experience of Henrietta Goplen within PARTICIPaction Saskatoon are the memories of Catherine Fauquier, Director of Media Relations for ParticipACTION and the first female professional to be hired at either national office. Fauquier worked exceptionally well with Russ Kisby and the other members of the Toronto office staff, but when the senior administration from Montreal visited the Toronto office on a bi-weekly basis, Fauquier experienced a much less inclusive work environment. During these visits, the professional staff typically took 1½ hour lunches at the Cambridge Club, eating, exercising, and discussing business. McKerracher pointed to the Cambridge Club's male-only policy as the unavoidable reason for Fauquier's exclusion from these important meetings. As Fauquier discussed in her interview for this study, the male staff would return in the afternoon having set the schedule for the rest of the day and having finalized long-term policy, effectively excluding Fauquier from decision-making.

According to McKerracher, he actively sought out "young and attractive" individuals to travel to local radio and television stations. Fauquier, a former hostess at Expo 67, fit this description. While McKerracher created two posts for national recruiting, Fauquier's title as Director of Media Relations was slightly different than Tom McMillan's as Director of

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<sup>277</sup> Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) 78.

<sup>278</sup> Andrew C. Holman, "The Canadian Hockey Player Problem: Cultural Reckoning and National Identities in American Collegiate Sport, 1947-80", *Canadian Historical Review*, 88:3 (September 2007) 443. Holman suggests that "sporting nationalism is a shifty construct", which holds viable meaning depending on whose interests it's serving at the time.



Communications, even though their duties and job descriptions remained identical.<sup>279</sup> In the course of her work, Fauquier discovered that McMillan was paid significantly more for doing the same job.<sup>280</sup> When she confronted McKerracher with this disparity, she was promptly fired. According to Fauquier, it was only due to significant pressure from her regional contacts that refused to work with anyone else that McKerracher reinstated Fauquier and marginally increased her wages.<sup>281</sup> Fauquier also experienced the theft of her intellectual property. On one occasion in particular, she had established a great rapport with a local Kinsmen association. She presented a partnership proposal to Keith McKerracher and, thereafter, McKerracher implemented the idea and took credit for its inspiration.

This difference in treatment between Catherine Fauquier and Henrietta Goplin can be attributed to the individuals involved and the intertwining personal relationships fostered in a smaller community like Saskatoon in the 1970s. While these personal connections undoubtedly influenced the internal culture of both levels of operation, I would suggest that the economic structure of the organizations played a significant role in the degree of inclusivity.

In the case of Fauquier, her major grievances concerned monetary remuneration and the lack of career advancement opportunities brought on by a misogynistic administrative culture. These issues of hierarchy and pay disparities did not exist within a volunteer organization that dolled out praise, credit, and social standing as the non-monetary rewards for hard work and volunteer hours. Goplen's uncontested status as a key organizer for PARTICIPAction Saskatoon stemmed from the quality of her work, not her title or compensation. The experiences of Goplen and Fauquier demonstrate that volunteerism did not pose a threat to the established social order

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<sup>279</sup> "Table 11, Administrative Staff of Participaction (1971-Present)" containing titles and job descriptions, Baka, 33.

<sup>280</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for

*ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

and afforded greater latitude to white middle-class women as non-professional gatekeepers of their fellow citizens. As feminist labour historians such as Alice Kessler-Harris, Mary Kinnear, Marjorie Cohen and Jacqueline Jones have well established, the value of non-waged work has never reached parity with traditional waged labour while targeted volunteerism in traditional maternal feminist areas of authority such as families, food, and the home allowed middle-class white women to carve out a form of authority without threatening their waged, white, male counterparts.<sup>282</sup> Placing the comparative analysis of Goplen and Fauquier's experiences into this framework it is clear that Goplen's was more positive, accepting, and non-confrontational because her labour did not hold the same economic importance as that contributed by Fauquier, nor did it threaten the position of the men around her.

#### Equal Parts Socializing and Business

While Keith McKerracher, Jacques Gravel, Russ Kisby, and Tom McMillan discussed business in the Cambridge Club, PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was also based on a combination of work and socializing. In oral interviews with Dr. and Mrs. Nixon, Henrietta Goplen, and Tom McClocklin, it became clear that PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was as much a social club of likeminded community elites as a health promotion organization. The exclusive group became close and, according to Dr. and Mrs. Nixon, a cadre still continues to meet on a semi-regular basis. Although Mrs. Nixon knew a great deal about the inner workings of the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon society, she did not dare attend meetings because she "didn't want to know what went on among that group of men". Her tone and other comments suggest that the group enjoyed drinking and socializing while planning events. This was a masculine culture that was made of

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<sup>282</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford University Press) 2003. Mary Kinnear, *A Female Economy : Women's Work in a Prairie Province 1870-1970* (McGill Queen's University Press) 1998. Marjorie Cohen, *Women's Work Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario*, (University of Toronto Press) 1988. Jacqueline Jones, *Labour of Love, Labour of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and Family from Slavery to the Present* (Vintage Books) 1985.

equal parts business and socializing. When asked if women were welcomed, Mrs. Nixon pointed to Henrietta Goplen as the only woman who could “hold her own” with that group. None of the women or men interviewed mentioned female board members Fedoruk or Lawson in this social milieu. Goplen, for her part, recognized that the environment may not have been overly welcoming to women but suggested that this level of gender exclusion was representative of the times, not necessary a reflection of any particular corporate misogyny within PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. Goplen, an accomplished speed skater, coach, and President of the Canadian Amateur Speed Skating Association, pointed to her background of “brothers and sons”<sup>283</sup> that made her particularly acclimatized to “the bluntness of men”<sup>284</sup>. Despite comments depicting the social environment within PARTICIPaction Saskatoon as a “boys’ club”<sup>285</sup> full of masculine competitiveness and drinking, these perceptions of this internal culture are complicated by the unfettered inclusion of Goplen in all events and activities, as well as the hiring of Barb Hodges as the Executive Director in 1977.

Despite a 1974 committee decision to fold up PARTICIPaction Saskatoon after the 1975 Swedish challenge, the national coverage of this initiative and the tremendous enthusiasm demonstrated in Saskatoon persuaded local organizers to continue with the society. In exploring the recollections of these early organizers, it appears the unpaid social reward of continuing this culture of camaraderie and fun also helps to explain the organization’s continuation, despite the tremendous time commitment required.

### ParticipACTION Steps Back

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<sup>283</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Henrietta Goplen, September 21, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

After the successful launch of the 60-year-old Swede advertisement and the national coverage of the successes of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, ParticipACTION's national offices were inundated with requests from Canadian towns and cities wanting to become ParticipACTION demonstration communities.<sup>286</sup> Besides Saskatoon, ParticipACTION established a second demonstration community in Keith McKerracher's hometown of Peterborough, Ontario. Without Kisby's personal attention, this second initiative never reached the level of success modeled in Saskatoon.<sup>287</sup> While ParticipACTION also started small projects in other communities such as Medicine Hat, Alberta, most of these were short-term advertising initiatives with no associated events or long-term commitment on the part of the national body. According to Russ Kisby and K.A. Somerville, ParticipACTION carefully decided to step back from demonstration community projects. With staff at both national offices together never totaling more than dozen individuals, ParticipACTION simply did not have the resources to maintain a number of demonstration community projects throughout the country. Instead, the national body continued building on the success of the 60-year-old Swede and focused its efforts on advertising. This decision on the part of McKerracher, Kisby, and others occurred in 1974 during the lead up to the Saskatoon-Umea challenge. It predated the completion of Baka's thesis that, as previously stated, urged expansion of staffing and local programming administered through branch offices as necessary to the organization's sustained growth and ultimate survival.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>287</sup> One indicator of these comparison are the number of clipping produced by both cities during the period between 1971 and 1976 as reflected in the Clipping Collection. Peterborough (Peterboro Review 18 + Peterborough Examiner 44) 62 versus Saskatoon (StarPhoenix) 103.

<sup>288</sup> R. Baka, *PARTICIPaction: an examination of its role in promoting physical fitness in Canada*. (M.A. thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1975).

In truth, the decision to focus on national campaigns more closely addressed ParticipACTION's stated objectives of promoting healthy lifestyle choices to the Canadian population through advertising and promotion. But this decision unintentionally disenchanted and effectively abandoned the local volunteer workforce and media managers that, in the long term, were ParticipACTION's greatest champions. By all accounts, the Saskatoon demonstration community project was a resounding success, having accomplished Phase 1 (branding and marketing) in record time with limited oversight or financial resources. In May of 1974, a survey of households in Saskatoon reported that 98% of those individuals polled knew of ParticipACTION and its health promotion message.<sup>289</sup> This level of brand awareness had been achieved in two years with just over \$100 000 in donated advertising from the local media and no direct funding from ParticipACTION's national coffers.<sup>290</sup>

With the announcement that ParticipACTION was pulling out of the Saskatoon project, the local Board of Directors decided to disband after the 1975 international challenge, leaving Saskatoon City Council to administer Phase 2. Both the Somerville thesis and the collected oral interviews provide clear evidence that the local organizers felt frustrated, unappreciated, and abandoned. According to Somerville, since they had received no direct funding from ParticipACTION and Kisby's tenure in Saskatoon to establish the project was only a few months, some board members felt that the long-term goal of this demonstration community project never had been clearly articulated by the national organization. The local organizers felt set adrift with no clearly intended destination and no support to get there.<sup>291</sup> In the spring of

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<sup>289</sup> Sport Participation Canada. *Saskatoon Marketing Survey IV*. Mimeograph, May, 1974. as appearing in Somerville, 67.

<sup>290</sup> T. McClocklin, *Report*, May 14, 1974 as appearing in Somerville, 67.

<sup>291</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, *Minutes of Meeting of the Management Committee*, February 5, 1976. as it appears in Somerville, 74.

1975, following ParticipACTION's pull back of support, Saskatoon held two events in the lead up to the Great Ga Lunka Lop. Attendance at these two warm-up events was modest at best.<sup>292</sup>

Despite the fact that a focus on national campaigns aligned with ParticipACTION organizers' vision of the agency's role, the action to pull back from supporting local programming ran counter to the original intent of ParticipACTION's founding. Of the origin stories explored in Chapter 2, all state the genesis of the agency to improve Canadians' physical fitness. This goal was not achieved by brand alone; it was achieved through local programming that generated peer pressure and internalized ParticipACTION's message through personal experiences.

### Stage 2

After the success of the 1975 Swedish project, the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon committee felt that Phase 1 had been achieved, and redirected its operation to the Stage 2 objective of mobilizing the population to undertake sustained physical activity. PARTICIPaction Saskatoon did not create activities but rather promoted existing services from the City of Saskatoon leisure centers, the YMCA and YWCA, as well as small local groups. In 1980, another international competition with Umea and Otaru, Japan as a third competing city was undertaken, but the event did not meet the same level of interest as the 1975 project. As Don Bailey explained, "the novelty had worn off"<sup>293</sup> among the Saskatoon population, the municipal government, and the corporate sponsors. As Paul Rutherford explains, the concept of 'wear out' is a common concern in consumer marketing and often comes on the heels of an extremely successful campaign that

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<sup>292</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, *Participation Results, Ga Lunka Lop*, February 18, 1975. as it appears in Somerville, 70.

<sup>293</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

has simply run its course.<sup>294</sup> In the case of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the same could also be said for the volunteer workforce and media managers who, after nearly six years of intensive promotion, looked to reduce their personal responsibility to the society. The solution to this trend of decreased enthusiasm came in the form of a generous grant from Saskatoon Kinsmen Club and the Pow City Kinsmen Club.<sup>295</sup> Together, the clubs provided \$25,000 of funding to hire a full-time staff person for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon.<sup>296</sup> The funding was renewed annually for a potential three-year term based on the success of the Stage 2 initiative. Former teacher Barb Van Meenan (later Hodges) was hired in January, 1977, as PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's first Executive Director.<sup>297</sup> As a result, the volunteer workforce further reduced its involvement, believing that the hired staff person could take on the lion's share of day-to-day operations. This drop in involvement from volunteers coincided with a decrease in advertising from local media outlets and resulted in a waning of public interest for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon. The volunteer board was instrumental in developing the connections and personal relationships to sustain the continued donations. As PARTICIPaction Saskatoon professionalized, the novelty of this volunteer initiative began to wane and those influential volunteers with political clout distanced themselves from the organization. This decline happened despite the innovative programming created by Hodges and the efforts to recapture the past passion for PARTICIPaction through the 1980 Umea-Saskatoon-Otaru Challenge.<sup>298</sup> In 1979, the Kinsmen Clubs did not renew their annual funding and PARTICIPaction Saskatoon began the process of folding.

### Somerville, Quantitative Analysis, and Unpopular Conclusions

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<sup>294</sup> Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 265.

<sup>295</sup> PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, *Minutes of Meeting*, July 13, 1976 as cited by Somerville, 74.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Barb Hodges, October 2, 2012 9:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

Somerville submitted her Master of Science thesis in 1983, just four years after PARTICIPaction Saskatoon ceased operation. It was a comprehensive study including multiple surveys of Saskatoon households over the course of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's Stage 1 and Stage 2 programming. Somerville concluded that while PARTICIPaction Saskatoon had effectively achieved the Stage 1 objectives of wide scale brand and message recognition, Stage 2 had proven much more difficult to realize. Educating Canadians about a fitness movement and brand was one thing; getting them to adopt this mindset and engage in regular physical activity was something else altogether. ParticipACTION's awareness of Somerville's study is undeniable. The young scholar's committee consisted of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon board members Howard Nixon and Dick Bell, as well as national board member Don Bailey, with Henrietta Goplen operating as the external examiner. Significantly, ParticipACTION also provided a portion of Somerville's graduate funding.

Somerville's thesis was of particular importance to ParticipACTION for several reasons. First, ParticipACTION lacked a baseline assessment of physical fitness levels in Canada prior to starting their programming. This fact, compounded by their constant lack of funds to conduct a national survey, meant that Somerville's statistical sampling stood as an important dataset for ParticipACTION to build upon. Second, if her study had proven that PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was statistically successful, then the original intent of the demonstration community model would have been achieved. By presenting Saskatoon as a concentrated microcosm of ParticipACTION programming, a successful comparison of physical fitness rates between Saskatoon and the national sampling could work to justify the continued federal financing of the national organization. Finally, if Somerville's study proved that PARTICIPaction Saskatoon had been successful, then all the organizers could once again enjoy the accolades that should have



accompanied their many years of volunteer work. Unfortunately for PARTIICPaction Saskatoon, ParticiACTION, and the Saskatoon volunteers, Somerville's study with its negative results produced none of the desired outcomes for these stakeholders. Comparing her local findings based on a random sampling of 4000 Saskatonians and 2000 Canadians, Somerville stated:

It would appear from this statistical analysis that the Saskatoon sample participated in the same amount of physical activity as did the Canada sample during [the same] time period. (Winter months 1973-1974).<sup>299</sup>

Somerville's study clearly indicates that, statistically speaking, the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon pilot project had no significant bearing on the long-term physical behaviour of the people of Saskatoon. On a local level, these results undermined the perceived value of this volunteer society and those individuals who had dedicated years to its service. From a national perspective, Somerville's findings suggested therefore that ParticiACTION would not succeed in changing the physical fitness levels of Canadians on a national scale, either.

### Reasons for Initial Success

The vital role of media promotion was one of the many reasons for PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's initial success in the city-wide walks, Achievement Week, and Great Ga Lunka Lop. National organizers such as McKerracher and Gaspé Beaubien clearly demonstrated their understanding of media's value in promoting the brand and raising awareness, but Jim Struthers demonstrated the power of targeted local coverage at motivating and mobilizing individuals to act. This model of direct coordination or competition by various media outlets was a useful example for countless other communities and causes. The ability of individual managers to fundamentally shape the coverage and advertising of a television station, radio station, or newspaper was significantly curtailed in Saskatoon during the 1980s when each was purchased

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<sup>299</sup> Somerville, 111.

by national media corporations. But this trend did not preclude targeted messaging, particularly if ParticipACTION was lobbying parent companies at a national level.

While the strong influence of the local media elites mirrored the structure of the national board, much of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's logistical success came from cooperation with the public sector in the form of the local school divisions, health region, and the municipal government. This local inter-sectorial coordination performed a similar role to local media in saturating Saskatoon with ParticipACTION messaging, but it also worked to motivate and potentially mobilize individuals through institutionally-enforced action. It is not surprising that many early signs of Stage 2 success came from education and healthcare providers. While ParticipACTION later formed partnerships with school boards and health units in targeted marketing contracts, these lacked the grass-roots local coordination that made PARTICIPaction Saskatoon so successful.<sup>300</sup>

The third key to PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's Stage 1 success was its dependence on a strong and energetic volunteer workforce of local professionals, who allowed the organization to garner a tremendous amount of free media exposure as well as donations from the corporate community. The fun and close-knit environment kept volunteers engaged even after ParticipACTION withdrew its administrative support in 1974. Part of this work was achieved by Kisby's targeted recruitment of community leaders through personal connections. As with media exposure, the costs of Kisby's initial work in Saskatoon effectively delivered a significant return on investment.

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<sup>300</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of the significant benefit of grass roots support can be drawn from another health related cause. In 2014-2015, The Terry Fox Foundation, a grassroots based organization, reported \$21,995,054.00 in Annual Giving in Canada along. The Canadian Cancer Society, a national organization focused on high level lobbying, generated \$41,574.00 in the same reporting period. Canadian Cancer Society – Societe Canadienne du Cancer, *Financial Statements*, Year ended January 31, 2015. The Terry Fox Foundation, *Financial Statement*, Year ended March 31, 2014.

The fourth important element of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's rise was the coordination between local events and national messaging. Despite the spurious statistic cited in the ad, the 60-year-old Swede received sufficient coverage to stoke motivation for the Saskatoon vs. Umea Challenge. By operating in concert, the national campaign multiplied work performed by local organizers without any additional cost to ParticipACTION.

It is this dual national-local thrust, either deliberate or serendipitous, that formed the bedrock of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's early success at Stage 1 (educate/motivate) and fueled early evidence of Stage 2 (mobilize) behavioural change amongst Saskatonians. It was the local programming, through media, volunteers, events, and activities that worked to internalize ParticipACTION's message through the generation of private memories that complimented, not undermined. This approach fostered the first signs of lifestyle change. Yet local efforts were crucially augmented by the national agency's willingness to initiate and coordinate in this cost-effective manner, typically at no additional cost to ParticipACTION other than Kisby's salary during the time he was in Saskatoon.

#### Saskatoon as *unintended* Microcosm

PARTICIPaction Saskatoon was reconfigured during its post-1975 decline. As an agency arms-length to municipal government and funded through annual grants, one paid employee ran PARTICIPaction Saskatoon promoting fitness activities already offered by other city services. Its new framework is strikingly similar to that which the ParticipACTION national agency became once it focused on national campaigns and targeted contracts. The lack of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's success between 1976 and 1980 is a clear indication that this model alone cannot achieve the goal of changing Canadians' behaviour.

Many members of the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon Board of Directors were in attendance for the 2004 opening festivities of the ParticipACTION Archives. Unsolicited, Mrs. Nixon, Henrietta Goplen, and Barbara Hodges each individually discussed this event and their extreme disappointment at the very small role the local pilot project was allocated in the celebrations. While many national representatives such as Russ Kisby and Don Bailey were asked to speak, Dr. Sam Landa, the strong leader at the head of the local organization, was overlooked.<sup>301</sup> According to Mrs. Nixon, “Sam was hurt”<sup>302</sup> by his omission, and the local committee members collectively viewed this ceremony as yet another slight against the tremendous work they had undertaken in Saskatoon. Like the gatekeepers investigated by Franca Iacovetta, the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon volunteers perceived themselves as “indispensible problem-solvers” who were the frontline soldiers working to “uplift and contain”<sup>303</sup> a population who, if left unchecked, would revert to deviant and dangerous lifestyle choices. Despite their non-monetary rewards of social elevation and moral authority, these individuals truly believed in the cause they had supported for nearly a decade. Their feelings of abandonment and betrayal were palpable when ParticipACTION’s history was celebrated and they were effectively omitted.

Yet, the omission of this project from the dominant social memory of ParticipACTION can be understood when viewed through the lens of what brand and message the agency’s leaders were attempting to craft. The demonstration community had been originally envisioned as an accelerated microcosm of the national movement providing tangible evidence of ParticipACTION’s long-term efficacy with Canadians. As Somerville’s results indicate, this

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<sup>301</sup> Don Bailey presented a detailed slideshow of ParticipACTION Saskatoon at this opening, but this detail was not remembered by any of the Phase 1 interviewees. Don Bailey, “Looking Back in Time: Health Promotion in Saskatoon 30 Years Ago”, ParticipACTION Archives Project, 2004.  
<http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/mobilize/ParSask.html>

<sup>302</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. and Mrs. Howard Nixon, September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>303</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 49-50.

demonstration community fulfilled its mandate as a forecast model for the national body; unfortunately, the outcome was not the one expected. If it were in fact the actions of ParticipACTION that undermined the long-term success of PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, then it was in the best interest of ParticipACTION to ignore Somerville's research and downplay the importance of the Demonstration Community project.

While PARTICIPaction Saskatoon's successes were extolled, its failures should not go unrecognized. The inability to achieve the Stage 2 objective of mobilization were an early indicator to ParticipACTION's national organizers that broad-scale behaviour modification was something very different than brand recognition, and while the latter was achievable, it was very likely that the former was beyond the grasp of a national social marketing agency working alone. Unfortunately, ParticipACTION's leaders did not take this lesson from the Saskatoon initiative. Statements in oral interviews, corroborated by the timeline of advertisements in the ParticipACTION Archives, indicate that there was at least one lesson that national organizers did learn. While it can be disputed that PARTICIPaction Saskatoon volunteers introduced humour to the advertising brand and identity, Struthers and his colleagues deserve credit for recognizing that humour was needed in order to make the ParticipACTION message palatable for consumers, a sentiment later repeated by McKerracher and implemented as early as 1973 in ParticipACTION's national billboard and newspaper campaigns.

No written record overtly makes the link between Somerville's conclusions and the conscious decision to downplay the role of the Saskatoon Demonstration Community project in the early years of ParticipACTION. Like the destruction of the Goplen files in the Physical Education Building demolition, no one person can be blamed for neglecting the history of these volunteers. The omission of these important individuals and their voices in the process of

commemoration undermines their personal perceptions of the value of their efforts, leaving a community of once-ardent supporters hurt and marginalized from the dominant recollections of this national organization.

The Saskatoon Demonstration Community Project has left an indelible mark on the City of Saskatoon in the tangible form of dedicated parks and facilities, as well as the social memories of those who were volunteers and participants. Nowhere else in Canada did ParticipACTION's messaging reach such a high percentage of a local population for such a sustained period of time. Based on its early success, many communities sought to replicate the model, further evidence that ParticipACTION was already successful in communicating its message of healthism. Because of the meteoric rise and post-1976 decline of the local organization, a great deal can be learned from PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, despite the fact that this process of reflection does not appear to have taken place. By ignoring the lessons offered by PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the national organization never achieved its secondary objective of changing Canadians' behaviour.

ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 4 – Regional Variation in Local Programming (1972-1976)

A further problem of size and distance has been to create a situation where it is too easy to get tied down in working especially in Montreal and Toronto, or other centres where there are large population bases. As a result, regions a distance from these urban centres tend to suffer.<sup>304</sup>

ParticipACTION between 1971 and 2000 built and maintained a national exposure that remained the envy of many competing marketing brands.<sup>305</sup> During its first twenty years, ParticipACTION presented programming with original first-language content in both official languages and supplemental regionally-tailored programming in provinces such as New Brunswick and Ontario and large cities such as Toronto and Vancouver.<sup>306</sup> As a result of these initiatives, the dominant social memory of ParticipACTION, one that is often described with adjectives such as positive, appealing, low-commitment, and fun, was effectively entrenched across Canada.<sup>307</sup> The conception of dominant social memory employed throughout this dissertation is drawn from the theorizing of Jonathan F. Vance, Canadian historian of memory and memorialization. Vance found the concept of individual and collective memory to be exceptionally problematic in its failure to address agency and social pressure to conform. He proposed the concept of social memory as an alternative, which he then further subdivided into

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<sup>304</sup> T. MacMillan, An Interview with Richard Baka, December 10, 1974 in Richard Baka, *PARTICIPaction: An Examination of its Role in Promoting Physical Fitness in Canada*, (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1975) 164.

<sup>305</sup> Gallup National Omnibus, *Awareness and Perception of PARTICIPACTION by CANADIANS*, (June 1992) 12. MG 291 2004-41 (9) ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan. The brand recognition of ParticipACTION was among the highest of any health, physical fitness or sporting organization in the country. The exact figures are reported in the Gallup National Omnibus poll. McKerracher, suggested that other brands were envious of ParticipACTION's success in his oral history collected for this study.

<sup>306</sup> "The Vancouver Challenge" and "1992 CrownLife ParticipACTION Challenge CITY OF TORONTO REPORT" MG 291 2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>307</sup> "Positive, fun, appealing" are the catchwords suggested to describe ParticipACTION's messages in "Messages", Kisby's Overviews, MG 291 2004-41 ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan. Kisby often described ParticipACTION as "low-commitment", most notably in "Interview with Russ Kisby", *ParticipACTION Archives Project*, December 2003. <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/motivate/boybreak.html> (viewed 21 January 2015).

the categories of private and dominant based on whether or not a social memory is supportive or subversive of the majority view. Vance explains that social memory is “any society’s conception of the past” and that the “dominant social memory emerges after a struggle between conflicting interpretations of historical events and comes to act as a bulwark for the social or political order on the grounds that it was ordained by history.”<sup>308</sup>

Applying this concept to ParticipACTION, both national and local levels of exposure appear to have been necessary for ParticipACTION to achieve at least the limited success of its stated aims. While not every region received locally targeted programming, all Canadian consumers of media encountered the national campaigns on television and in national magazines.<sup>309</sup> This homogenous image of ParticipACTION formed the basis of a dominant social memory that offers little variation across its national distribution. As will be explored in this chapter, while this dominant social memory remains concretely fixed, the existence of a personal experience with ParticipACTION programming varies dramatically based on region, ethnicity, and physical location.

By employing Historical GIS (Geographic Information Sciences) mapping technology to the Clipping Collection contained in the ParticipACTION Archives, this chapter explores the variance in ParticipACTION exposure across Canada for a six-year dataset beginning in 1971. By geocoding ParticipACTION’s press exposure and overlaying these national data with population density statistics pulled from the 1971 Census of Canada, it becomes visibly apparent that ParticipACTION focused its energy and advertising on gaining exposure in large urban centers to the direct detriment of rural, northern, and First Nations communities.<sup>310</sup> While the

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<sup>308</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and The First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) 12.

<sup>309</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>310</sup> Table 2 Population of Census Subdivisions, 1921-1971, 1971 Census of Canada.



reasons behind this purposeful concentration can be strategically justified based on ParticipACTION's marketing objectives, the decision resulted in noteworthy differences in the social memory of ParticipACTION for these less-targeted groups. The absence of local programming meant that for these Canadians, ParticipACTION only exists in the form of the dominant social memory, with little reinforcement of personal or private memory of internalized biocitizenship and individually tailored behaviour modification messaging.<sup>311</sup> Looking at ParticipACTION's programming from a demographic perspective, health experts John Spence and his co-authors conducted a population survey on 4,650 Canadians over a period of 6 months in 2007-2008. Their study found that Canadians who had obtained a higher level of education and who had a higher income were more likely to be able to identify ParticipACTION both aided and unaided. This correlation can be predicted by the knowledge gap hypothesis<sup>312</sup> which suggests "that people of higher socio-economic status (SES) benefit more from information flowing into a social system (e.g. through media campaigns) than do people of lower SES".<sup>313</sup> As such, ParticipACTION's public service announcements, billboards, and radio advertisements were innately more effective in reaching those with higher SES and education. Unpacking their findings, Spence and associates stated that although most adult Canadians could identify ParticipACTION, "initiatives such as ParticipACTION may actually exacerbate existing differences between socioeconomic status (SES) groups in both behaviour and health."<sup>314</sup> Since ParticipACTION's advertisements and campaigns were made by white, middle-class Canadians

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<sup>311</sup> Biocitizenship is the concept that citizens understand their nationality at least, in part, in biological terms and this senses of biological identification and affiliation demands certain ethical adherences. Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, "Biological Citizenship", Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds. *Global Anthropology*, (Blackwell, 2003) 4.

<sup>312</sup> P.J. Tichenor, G.A. Donohue, C.N. Olien CN, "Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34 (1970) 159-170.

<sup>313</sup> John C. Spence, Lawrence R. Brawley, Cora Lynn Craig, Ronald C. Plotnikoff, Mark S. Tremblay, Adrian Bauman, Guy EJ Faulkner, Karen Chad, and Marianne I Clark, "ParticipACTION: Awareness of the ParticipACTION campaign among Canadian adults – Examining the knowledge gap hypothesis and a hierarchy-of-effects model", *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 6:85 (2009).

<sup>314</sup> Spence, 6:85.

living in urban centres, its programming more strongly connected with this same segment of Canadian society.

This unequal exposure to government prescriptive messaging was further exacerbated by the programming decisions of the Toronto office. ParticipACTION's media outreach team chose to concentrate its resources on urban, southern, and white Canadians to the direct neglect of First Nations, rural, northern, and first-generation Canadians. While the social determinants of health<sup>315</sup> contribute to the wide variance in physical fitness rates across Canada, ParticipACTION's failure to target messaging to rural, northern, First Nations communities may have contributed to a sense of exclusion and differing perception within these communities regarding perceived cultural expectations of physical fitness and national identity in comparison to urban Canadians with higher socio-economic status and higher education levels.

#### A Unique Dataset

Beginning in 1971, Canadian Press Clipping Services (CPCS) was contracted by Sports Participation Canada to cut and paste all newspaper coverage of ParticipACTION in all newspaper outlets across Canada.<sup>316</sup> This bookkeeping practice was undertaken in order to allow the fledgling organization to calculate the value of the free press coverage that it received. CPCS collected and catalogued all ads, news articles, and feature stories from across Canada mentioning ParticipACTION, and they recorded the publication date, newspaper name, and, when available, the paper's current circulation. Beginning in 1972, these large sketchbooks filled with glued newspaper pages contain a preface with a typed enumerated list of the contents and

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<sup>315</sup> In 1974, the Federal Minister of National Health and Welfare, Marc Lalonde tabled a report entitled *A new Perspective on the Health of Canadians*. It was a foundational document in the field of health promotion and defined socio-economic factors such as environment and lifestyle as contributing to an individual's overall ability to become and maintain health. These categories have expanded since 1974 but the collective grouping of these non-biological health factors are collectively called the social determinants of health. Marc Lalonde, *A new Perspective on the Health of Canadians* (National Department of Health and Wellness) 1974.

<sup>316</sup> Clipping Books 1-25, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

the advertising list price for each of the newspapers featured. With this information in hand, Keith McKerracher, whose responsibilities included budgeting and advertising, calculated the value of newspaper advertising ParticipACTION had received free of charge in a given year.<sup>317</sup> This after-market recording process became necessary due to the logistical constraints brought on by McKerracher's philosophy. As described in his written narrative for this study, McKerracher and his team made every effort to ensure the process of publishing or airing a ParticipACTION PSA was as effortless and cost effective as possible. While other organizations asked the media outlets to enumerate the number of times a PSA was featured and the associated advertising value, ParticipACTION streamlined the process and shifted this work from the donating media outlet to ParticipACTION itself. By divesting the production and accounting duties, media executives soon realized that running a ParticipACTION advertisement was far easier than any other PSA.<sup>318</sup> With this effective infrastructure in place, ParticipACTION advertising grew five-fold during its first five years of operation.<sup>319</sup>

#### GIS, Historical GIS, and the Possibilities for Social Historians

Although originally intended as an accounting tool for analysis in the annual report to the Ministry of National Health and Welfare, the Clipping Collection is a rich source for spatial, temporal, and topical analysis of this six-year period in ParticipACTION print exposure. The use of GIS mapping lends itself to any collection or dataset that contains geographic locations. This highly visual representation of evidence affords the researcher an opportunity to interrogate sources with a new set of questions based on spatial relationships that otherwise may have been

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<sup>317</sup> R. Baka, *PARTICIPAction: an examination of its role in promoting physical fitness in Canada*. (M.A. thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1975) 33.

<sup>318</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>319</sup> A total of 55 clippings were procured for 1971, this number increased by five fold by 1975, with that year producing 281 entries in the Clipping Collection.

unobserved or difficult to measure. The use of GIS has become commonplace in the fields of urban planning, sociology, and geography, but has struggled to make significant inroads in many sub-disciplines of academic history. As Amy Hillier has outlined in her 2010 article for the *Journal of Planning History*, the underuse of this analytical tool in history is a result of the converging realities of systemic inaccessibility and personal discomfort with technology held by many humanities specialists.<sup>320</sup> The result is a generation of established historians who do not have the skills to employ this quantitative analytical approach and, in turn, do not push for such courses or training in their own departments.<sup>321</sup> This trend has left academic historians at a distinct disadvantage to innovative research disciplines in the social sciences. This is not to say historians en masse have neglected this important methodological approach, but rather that it has only been adopted by historical disciplines that engage in a sustained dialogue of cross-disciplinary research with social science-based academic disciplines.<sup>322</sup>

### The Process: from Clipping to Mapping

The Clipping Collection in the ParticipACTION Archives stands as an excellent example of a complete source or ‘dataset’ that easily lends itself to this analytical process. Between August 10, 1971 and August 24, 1977, ParticipACTION was featured in 1016 entries in 251 newspapers across Canada. Each entry includes both a spatial and temporal marker and, because of the collection’s initial importance as an accounting tool, the records seem reasonably complete. One question that remains unanswered regarding the Clipping Collection is why the

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<sup>320</sup> Amy Hillier, “Invitation to Mapping: How GIS Can Facilitate New Discoveries in Urban and Planning History”, *Journal of Planning History* 9 (2010) 122. Writing in an American context, Hillier suggests that few university history departments have ready access to GIS laboratories and rarely offer GIS method courses among their graduate student course offerings.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Geoff Cunfer, “Scaling the Dust Bowl,” in *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship*, Anne Kelly Knowles, ed. Redlands, Calif.: ESRI Press, (2008) 95-121. Benjamin C. Ray, “Teaching the Salem Witch Trials”, Knowles, Anne Kelly, Ed. *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History*, ESRI Press, (2002) 19-33. Amy Hillier, “Invitation to Mapping: How GIS Can Facilitate New Discoveries in Urban and Planning History”, *Journal of Planning History* 9 (2010) 122.

recording ended in 1977. This may be a result of later scrapbooks being lost in the interim period between 1977 and the Archives' founding in 2004, or perhaps the collection ceased in 1977 due to increasing expense or the mounting internal conflicts that resulted in McKerracher's departure in 1978. The collection also may have ceased due to a lack of appreciation for its utility on the part of the non-marketing staffers that remained after McKerracher's departure.

### Logistics Encapsulated

The process of taking a historical text or visual collection and translating it to a GIS map is time consuming, involving a great deal of skill and necessary technical support. First, a complete database of the original sources had to be compiled. This initial database had to then undergo a process of georeferencing wherein each data point (newspaper) had to be assigned a latitudinal and longitudinal value that corresponded with its origin city or town. Using ESRI's ARC GIS 10.1 software, much of this georeferencing was computer generated, but the process was not without complication.<sup>323</sup> With these 251 points placed on the map, I gave each paper a symbolic range to represent various levels of press coverage with larger triangles representing a greater number of newspaper entries present in the Clipping Collection. Although helpful in identifying concentrations of support for ParticipACTION's messaging among the local media, this data did not have an intrinsic population context. In order to translate press coverage into public exposure, I pulled accurate population distribution data from the 1971 Census of Canada.<sup>324</sup> Due to limitations of the digital access to such recent census data, I needed to manually record, database, and geocode all incorporated towns and cities in Canada.

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<sup>323</sup> I received generous assistance from Mr. Mike St. Louis of the University of Saskatchewan, Historical GIS laboratory in geo-referencing cities and town, in finding an appropriate map template and relating my census data to the clipping collection data. Although personal involved in this process, these data could not have been generated without the support of Mr. St. Louis and Dr. Geoff Cunfer, Head of the Historical GIS Lab and member of the University of Saskatchewan Department of History.

<sup>324</sup>Table 2 Population of Census Subdivisions, 1921-1971, 1971 Census of Canada.

As Marc St. Hilaire, Byron Moldofsky, Laurent Richard, and Mariange Beaudry have outlined in their 2007 article discussing the often-fraught process of mapping Canadian historical census data, the 1971 Census of Canada is not without its flaws.<sup>325</sup> Regional variation in the recording process can be clearly identified, potentially skewing any quantitative analysis of sheer numbers pulled from this data. For instance, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador underwent ‘community grouping’ where small villages and hamlets were gathered into the nearest centre with a population over 1000 people. This process resulted in 84 community entries for a province with a population of 522 104, resulting in an average population of 6216 people per community. By contrast, British Columbia, with a population of 2 184 621, underwent a much more aggressive process of small community grouping, resulting in only 47 separate entries being recorded and an average population of 46 481 people per entry. This difference in demographic dispersal can be explained and justified by human geography attributes such as regional history, settlement patterns, and the needs of the local economy, but setting these justifications aside, this difference in recording methodology can work to visually skew the data on a population density map generated using vector-based GIS mapping.<sup>326</sup> In other words, even though the dots on the map that represent towns are scaled to indicate larger and smaller centers, there are simply more dots in Newfoundland and Labrador than in British Columbia, making the Atlantic province seem the more populated of the two. This inconsistency in the census recording process can be seen across the country with overrepresentation of centers in provinces such as Saskatchewan and severe underrepresentation of small centers in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. This is not necessarily a fatal flaw of the 1971 Census of Canada

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<sup>325</sup> Marc St. Hilaire, Byron Moldofsky, Laurent Richard and Mariange Beaudry, “Geocoding and Mapping Historical Census Data: The Geographical Component of the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure.” *Historical Methods*, 40:2 (Spring, 2007).

<sup>326</sup> As the Clipping Collections offered data points, it made the most sense to employ vector rather than raster mapping techniques.

community records, but it is a shortcoming of the data that must be accounted for and considered when analyzing this dataset.

### Analyzing the Map

Through a traditional reading of the Clippings Collection, it quickly became apparent that ParticipACTION focussed its programming on large urban centers. When the finished map was produced, this visual representation of the dataset provided for a much more nuanced analysis. First, while ParticipACTION heavily targeted large and medium urban centres such as Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and St. John's, the emphasis on medium and small centers varied widely from province to province. In Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick, it seems that most local papers printed ParticipACTION ads and articles. Every paper from the *Summerside Journal* to the *Truro Daily News* was included in the database. By contrast, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon Territory, and the Northwest Territories received little local press coverage pertaining to ParticipACTION and its fitness message. While the argument could be made that these four regions represent only 7.2% of the national population in 1971, they still remained underexposed to ParticipACTION messaging with only 2.6% of ParticipACTION's local advertising reaching these Canadians in twelve local newspapers.<sup>327</sup>

Why did this variance in regional representation exist? Large concentrations of coverage existed in provinces and markets where ParticipACTION staff and board members had personal connections and interests. Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were always well represented within the ParticipACTION organization, with media elites such as Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, Richard Oland, and Jim Struthers exerting pressure on smaller

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<sup>327</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador (522104), Manitoba (988247), Yukon (18388), Northwest Territory (34807) Population of Canada (21568311). Data pulled from Table 2 Population of Census Subdivisions, 1921-1971. 26 newspaper entries representing 8 local newspapers out of a database on 1015 entries in 251 local papers.

media outlets within their respective spheres of influence. Second, the provincial governments' receptiveness to ParticipACTION programming heavily influenced media exposure in small- and medium-sized markets. In an interview, former Assistant Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare Peter Lesaux<sup>328</sup> suggested that some provincial ministries of health and, by extension, some provincial governments, resented ParticipACTION's involvement in a provincial jurisdiction. Without giving specific examples, Lesaux indicated a jealousy existed between these two levels of government that actively worked to hinder ParticipACTION's progress in certain provinces. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick not only supported ParticipACTION's national promotional campaigns, but worked with ParticipACTION to jointly produce provincially tailored content in the areas of seniors health and wellness, childhood nutrition, and school fitness programming.<sup>329</sup> Personal connections among ParticipACTION's national board and employees coupled with provincial government support explains the interprovincial inconsistency of small- and medium-sized market representation in ParticipACTION's print media exposure during this six-year dataset. Interestingly, within supportive provinces, small- and medium-sized markets' proportion of ParticipACTION print media exposure was in line with their share of the provincial population. It appears that in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick, government support facilitated exposure.

### Major Cities and Capital Regions

ParticipACTION focussed the majority of its attention on large urban centres. This

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<sup>328</sup> Peter Lesaux acted as the federal government representative on ParticipACTION's national Board of Directors from 1977 to 2000. Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Peter Lesaux, November 20, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>329</sup> "Action Kit" for SummerActive 1998 designed exclusively for Fitness Ontario, MG 291 2004 (7), "Project APEX 1987-1995", sponsored by the Alberta Dairy Nutrition Council and Alberta Recreation and Parks, MG 291 2004-41 (3), "In Motion", Initiated by Saskatoon District Health, in cooperation with the University of Saskatchewan and ParticipACTION, MG 291 2004-41 (6), "Healthy Active Living, Vie saine et active", a joint project of ParticipACTION, in partnership with The Government of New Brunswick, Health Canada, The Heart & Stroke Foundation of New Brunswick and Health Alliance/Alliance Sante, MG 291 2004-41 (9).



conclusion is not only supported by an analysis of the Clipping Collection GIS mapping project but also by oral histories conducted with past employees such as Catherine Fauquier and Peter Lesaux.<sup>330</sup> During the 1971-1977 period that, for the most part, corresponded with the tenure of President Keith McKerracher, Fauquier indicated that McKerracher was not interested in reaching northern, rural, or First Nations communities. Fauquier did not feel that this was any prejudice on the part of McKerracher; as an advertising expert with limited resources and the singular goal of achieving brand recognition, these communities were simply “not on Keith’s radar”.<sup>331</sup> Between 1971 and 1977, the twelve provincial and territorial capitals along with Ottawa represented only 11% of the national population but received 45% of ParticipACTION’s locally targeted newspaper programming. If Vancouver and Montreal are added to this list of cities, the ratio remain much the same, with 56% of ParticipACTION’s newspaper exposure reaching only 16% of the national population. This overexposure in large urban centres came at the expense of rural, northern, and First Nations communities pre-dominantly in the regions of British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon Territory, and the Northwest Territories. Individuals in these regions likely did not internalize ParticipACTION’s programming or develop personal experiences with this national health promotion organization.

#### Caveats to Consider

This quantitative analysis of ParticipACTION’s press exposure is valuable but is not without its problems. First, the 1971-1977 period predates the well-documented trend in Canadian urban amalgamations that took place in the mid-1990s and effectively changed the

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<sup>330</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*, and Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Peter Lesaux, November 20, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>331</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

municipal structure of cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax.<sup>332</sup> This Clipping Collection data fails to include the suburban catchment areas that could reasonably be counted among the circulation numbers of urban centres' major newspapers such as *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, or *The Toronto Star*. This analysis also assumes no ripple effect in broader newspaper distribution. Drawing solely from the Clipping Collection fails to consider that some of these rural and northern Canadians also might subscribe to some degree of service, whether weekly or daily, from a regional or national newspaper. For instance, while most residents of La Ronge, SK, might subscribe to the *La Ronge Northerner*, a paper that did not appear in the Clipping Collection and was not targeted for ParticipACTION's advertisements, some may have received editions of the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* or *The Globe and Mail*, papers that ParticipACTION heavily targeted. This hidden distribution of ParticipACTION exposure outside major centres is difficult to quantify yet must be considered in any thorough analysis of these exposure ratios. It should also be noted that socio-economic factors come into play when considering the rural influence of newspaper distribution. Viewing an urban national newspaper subscription as a luxury item, few working-class and lower-middle class families participate in this consumption and therefore were not influenced by the advertising and news articles contained therein. This economic trend had the effect of leaving Canadians already potentially disadvantaged by the social determinants of health further isolated from federal programming ostensibly designed to help them make 'better' lifestyle choices.

#### A Child of Bilingualism and Biculturalism

In the wake of the 1969 Royal Commission Report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,

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<sup>332</sup> Andrew Sancton, "Why Municipal Amalgamations? Halifax, Toronto, Montreal", *Institute of Intergovernmental Relations*, (Queen's University, May 9-10, 2003).

language representation was a key concern for the leadership of ParticipACTION.<sup>333</sup> Its name, its staffing, and its campaigns were all steeped in the philosophy of bilingualism and biculturalism. Much of its print exposure demonstrated this commitment, as well as the limitations, to this rather exclusive form of language equity. Of the 251 newspapers carrying ParticipACTION messaging, 226 were English publications and 25 were French, with three of this latter group coming from outside of Quebec: the *St. Boniface Courier* that serviced the Franco-Manitoban community, the *L'Evangeline-Moncton* representing the Acadian community, and the *Ottawa Le Droit*, which counted the Franco-Ontarian community among its readership. These numbers demonstrate a significant under-representation of francophones in Canada.

Despite this praiseworthy effort to target English and French communities across Canada, the agents of ParticipACTION's messaging failed to take into consideration many other well-established and growing language groups within the country. Of the 1015 articles featured in the Clipping Collection, none are written in a language other than French or English, with absolutely no representation recorded in allophone community papers such as the Toronto-based Italian newspaper *Corriere Canadese* or the Vancouver-based Chinese newspaper *Ming Pao*. This failure to reach out to these cultural communities is made all the more fascinating when consideration is given to how they were otherwise surveilled by the Canadian state. According to a growing number of immigrant and cultural scholars, led by historian Franca Iacovetta, the personal habits of immigrants were heavily monitored in the period directly after the Second World War.<sup>334</sup> Seemingly mundane day-to-day activities such as cooking, childcare, and cleaning became the battleground for assimilation wherein a cadre of government-employed

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<sup>333</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Challenge of Bilingualism: ParticipACTION Campaigns Succeeded in Two Languages", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S30.

<sup>334</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto:Between the Lines, 2006) 137.

social workers assessed a family's successful integration based on their ability to eschew culturally significant practices in favour of the 'Canadian way' of life. This level of monitoring and prescriptive messaging as it pertained to these communities does not seem to have entered into ParticipACTION's mandate despite its commitment to behaviour modification in the area of lifestyle, physical fitness, and nutrition. This omission, like the omission of all language groups among rural and northern Canadians, helps to clarify who exactly ParticipACTION's programming was intended to reach and by extension helps to pinpoint what ParticipACTION's objectives were for Canadians.

#### First Nations, Obesity, and ParticipACTION's Tactics

The omission of First Nations communities from ParticipACTION's programming in this period can also be attributed to McKerracher's singular objective of increasing brand recognition in the most visible populations and effective markets of Canada. That First Nations communities were not viewed as relevant centres of cultural influence speaks more to the cultural ethos and political reality of Canada during the 1970s than to the ParticipACTION administration's personal views regarding these communities.<sup>335</sup> In her 2009 dissertation exploring the historical roots of the currently constructed obesity crisis, Deborah McPhail outlines the cultural discourse that surrounded obesity between 1945 and 1970 and the intrinsic racial component of this disease's pathology. According to McPhail, the medical profession constructed obesity as an unfortunate by-product of a 'civilized' and 'modern' society complete with television culture and ample leisure time resulting in sedentary lifestyle. As a resulting condition of modern living, only white and middle- to upper-class Canadians were susceptible to this contagion and, as a

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<sup>335</sup> Both Mosby and Kelm discuss First Nations health and its lack of place within the idea of 'Canada' during this period and earlier. Ian Mosby, *Food will win the war: the politics, culture, and science of food on Canada's home front*, (University of British Columbia Press, 2014). Mary Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50*, (University of British Columbia Press, 1996).

result, were targeted with a marketing barrage of “anti-obesity” messaging.<sup>336</sup> By contrast, the Canadian medical profession constructed First Nations communities, urban First Nations individuals, and racialized immigrant communities as not susceptible to obesity because they were viewed as too ‘primitive’ to meet the pre-conditions necessary to contract the disease. According to McPhail, this view was the prevailing pathology concerning obesity during the period in which ParticipACTION was established by the federal government. McPhail suggests that the racialized discourse surrounding the pathologizing of obesity was a tangible example of Canada’s assimilation strategy and colonial agenda in this period.<sup>337</sup>

Placing McPhail’s work into a biocitizenship framework, failures on the part of middle-class and upper-class white Canadians to conform to stated ideals of fitness put into jeopardy this important group’s position as ‘good citizens’. If these Canadians, who are often framed as the “normative national subjects”<sup>338</sup>, were failing to meet the physical requirements of good citizenship, the stability of the country’s identity itself was at risk. These were the communities in need of programming, not First Nations who were not susceptible to a disease brought on by a modern lifestyle.

ParticipACTION eventually shifted to incorporate community engagement and outreach into its mission statement under the Presidency of Russ Kisby, a man with a Master’s degree in Community Leadership and Development.<sup>339</sup> By the 1990s, Kisby attempted to engage various First Nations communities in Ontario by creating special Community Activation liaisons for First

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<sup>336</sup> Deborah McPhail, “Canada Weighs In: Gender, Race, and the Making of “Obesity,” 1945-1970”, (PhD. diss., York University, 2009) 4.

<sup>337</sup> McPhail, 4.

<sup>338</sup> McPhail, 4.

<sup>339</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Merle Kisby, October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

Nations.<sup>340</sup> Kisby also targeted non-English, non-French speaking communities in Canada, created Chinese language content and special activity days for the city of Vancouver, and actively included Inuit in the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000.<sup>341</sup> These initiatives would not have occurred to Keith McKerracher in his political time or with his stated objectives for the fledgling organization. For the marketing guru coming from the business world, reaching out to economically marginalized Canadians provided little bang for buck.

### Deviation Within Provinces

Press exposure in local newspapers was only one medium of local programming promoted by ParticipACTION in this period, but it was the keystone on which all other forms of advertising and community outreach were dependent. While the Clipping Collection only catalogued print coverage of ParticipACTION in this six-year period, it can be reasonably assumed that the Clipping Collection distribution also closely mirrored local television and radio coverage. When travelling to small- or medium-sized centres, Fauquier and McMillan visited all media outlets. According to Keith McKerracher, of the three – newspapers, radio, and television – newspapers proved the most difficult form of media to penetrate.<sup>342</sup> McKerracher suggested that the internal culture within the print industry did not lend itself to the donation of free advertising space unless motivated when competing media were donating as well. As seen in the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon case study, this competitiveness between local media outlets worked to ParticipACTION's advantage. This relationship is evidence that most centers represented in the Clipping Collection also would have experienced coverage in radio and television.

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<sup>340</sup> Paul Burke, "My Weeklies" Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000, University of Saskatchewan Archives, ParticipACTION Archives MG 291 2004-41(10).

<sup>341</sup> Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 Binder, MG 291 2004-41 (10), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>342</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

Looking beyond local press coverage to community outreach, Catherine Fauquier suggests that the promotion of ParticipACTION in schools and with community groups grew organically out of local press coverage and was organized around the visits of ParticipACTION media relations representatives.<sup>343</sup> Fauquier remembers visiting a radio station as part of her quarterly rounds and being approached to give a presentation to the local school about ParticipACTION's message and the importance of physical activity.<sup>344</sup> These types of presentations became a common addition to the local media junket. But McKerracher neither actively supported nor encouraged community outreach into schools, local municipal councils, or service groups that was a beneficial spin-off to the media campaign. These additional community contacts were not the primary purpose of a ParticipACTION employee's visit.

Regardless of the original perception of these community connections as tangential to the primary objectives of media visits, it was unwittingly through this form of outreach that significant social pressure and the personal experience with ParticipACTION's messaging began. As seen in the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon pilot project, the power of influential people within the community to re-enforce ParticipACTION's prescriptive messaging was essential to move beyond wide-scale brand recognition into the entrenchment of both ParticipACTION's dominant social memory and the establishment of a complementary peer pressure within a local population. This snowball effect of media and community exposure created pockets of re-enforced public awareness around influential media outlets but it also meant that communities without influential regional newspapers did not receive the reinforced messaging in their local schools or community groups. This bifurcation of the Canadian population into 'haves' and 'have-nots' in relation to ParticipACTION local programming resulted in a group of Canadians

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<sup>343</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Catherine Fauquier, September 23, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

who could recite ParticipACTION jingles yet felt no personal attachment to the underlying messaging and held no overt adherence to ParticipACTION's healthism project.

### Black-River Matheson: A Micro-Case study

Black-River Matheson in north-eastern Ontario was one of hundreds of communities in Canada that experienced this dearth in local ParticipACTION programming. Matheson, as it is locally known, is a rural municipality encompassing five small towns with a combined population of approximately 2100. Added to this number are the roughly 250 members of the Wahgoshig First Nation (Treaty #9) just east of the Matheson town site.<sup>345</sup> Between 1971-1976 there was no local paper representing these communities and the nearest newspaper, the *Iroquois Falls Enterprise*, was also not listed among the Clipping Collection database. Catherine Fauquier and her associate Tom McMillan did not consider this municipality or its surrounding area a place of strategic significance to promote ParticipACTION programming. This lack of press coverage consequently resulted in an absence of community outreach and school programming. Rural schools and school boards such as the Cochrane-Iroquois Falls-Black River Matheson Board of Education did not provide prescriptive messaging to encourage school administrators and students to adopt a physically active lifestyle.<sup>346</sup> By comparison, Ontario's Scarborough School Board trustee Brian Wallace encouraged students at West Hill Collegiate to walk to school rather than taking the TTC<sup>347</sup>, and the Montreal Catholic School Commission opened schools such as Edouard Montpetit comprehensive high school to act as an after-hours

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<sup>345</sup> Black-River Matheson is the author's hometown. Details are drawn from personal knowledge and unofficial interviews from the area.

<sup>346</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dominic DeFelice, September 30, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>347</sup> "Trustee says 'it wouldn't hurt' if students walked to school". *The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 30, 1972. Clipping Collections, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.



community centre for physical fitness<sup>348</sup>. Dominic DeFelice, the long-time physical education teacher and coach at Matheson's only school, suggested that no programming, materials, or visits were ever received from ParticipACTION during his career that began in 1974.<sup>349</sup> When asked about ParticipACTION programming in the area, DeFelice pointed to the national television campaign as the only presence ParticipACTION had in the community and region. This lack of programming existed despite receptive educators and available sporting facilities, such as the local rink. This brief case study of Black-River Matheson stands as a salient example of the experience of many rural, northern, First Nations, and immigrant communities. While non-targeted Canadians such as those from Matheson can identify ParticipACTION based on the national campaigns that flooded national media during the 1970s. A lack of newspaper coverage translated into a lack of community outreach and school programming, which correlated with a lack of personal experience with ParticipACTION. They likely did not internalize the underlying prescriptive messaging or pressure to conform to ParticipACTION's healthism project. For many rural, northern, First Nations, or racialized Canadians, ParticipACTION failed in its agenda of behaviour modification because its messaging lacked personal re-enforcement within their communities.

### Contextualizing the Data

In 1992, Gallup National Omnibus conducted a national survey of "1000+ in-home interviews"<sup>350</sup> with Canadians regarding their views of ParticipACTION.<sup>351</sup> Gallop found that 83% of Canadians easily identified ParticipACTION, a statistic they noted as being remarkable

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<sup>348</sup> "Schools to open after hours", *The Montreal Star*, Jan. 3, 1972. Clipping Collections, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Gallup National Omnibus, *Awareness and Perception of PARTICIPACTION by CANADIANS*", (June 1992)1. MG 291 2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>351</sup> While two previous surveys had been conducted in 1978 and 1989, the 1992 Gallup survey is by far the most methodically impartial, thorough, and quantitatively significant.

given that most established national brands receive a rating between 50-60%. Delving deeper, when asked if “ParticipACTION had personally influenced them”<sup>352</sup>, only 7% of Canadians suggested that their views and behaviours had changed as a direct result of ParticipACTION’s programming, with 60% of Canadians claiming “not to have been influenced to become more physically active”<sup>353</sup>. This disconnect between widely held brand recognition and the ability to effect behavioural change lies at the heart of Canadians’ relationship with ParticipACTION or with national marketing campaigns more broadly. Probing further, Gallop discovered that only 42% of Canadians had encountered ParticipACTION programming “outside of the media”<sup>354</sup>, with school, community, and work given as potential places of contact for this engagement. As seen in PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, brand awareness through the national campaign did not ‘mobilize’; only local programming that resulted in complementary personal experience and sustained peer pressure appear to potentially achieve this aim.

Although it is impossible to extrapolate a rural/urban or racial breakdown based on this Gallop survey, the parallel findings in this dissertation’s GIS mapping analysis of the Clipping Collection offers a potential explanation for the Gallop numbers. Medium and large centres in Canada were far more likely to experience sustained exposure to ParticipACTION advertising in their local media outlets. As a result of this exposure, spurred on by visits from ParticipACTION representatives, community outreach occurred in the form of school visits, school programs, and community presentations. This community-based re-enforcement of ParticipACTION’s messaging resulted in the personal entrenchment of ParticipACTION’s healthism agenda. In turn this influence culminated in the establishment of a private social memory of ParticipACTION

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<sup>352</sup> Gallup National Omnibus, *Awareness and Perception of PARTICIPACTION by CANADIANS*, (June 1992) 10. MG 291 2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

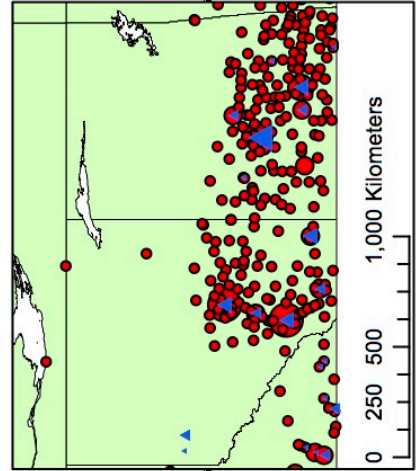
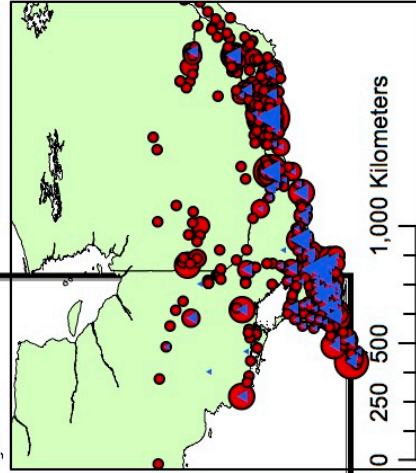
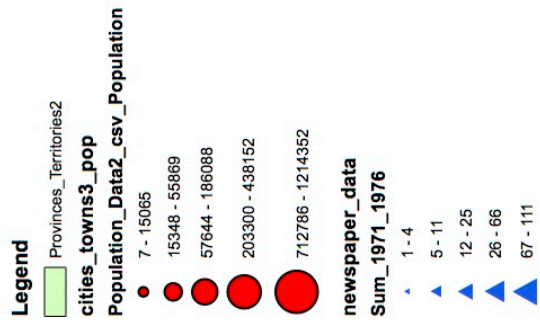
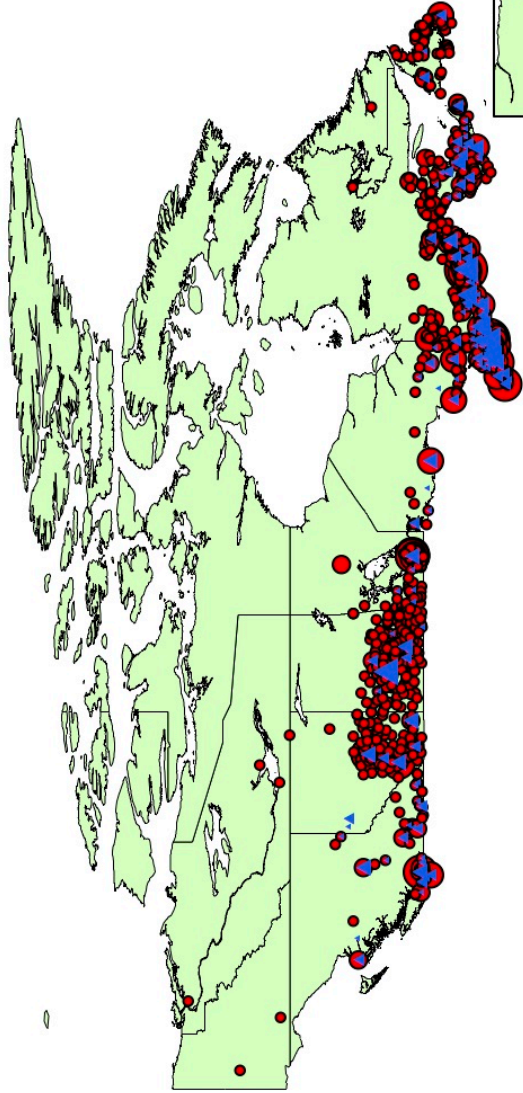
<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

among this group of Canadians. With this analysis in hand, it could be reasonably assumed that those residing in medium and large urban centres would most likely fall into the 42% of Canadians who reported experiencing ParticipACTION programming in their community. That 60% of Canadians reported that ParticipACTION had no personal impact on their views of physical fitness could speak to the rural, northern, First Nations, and racialized Canadians who were not targeted for local programming and who, in turn, did not develop a personal attachment to ParticipACTION's prescriptive messaging. The presence of local programming produced short-term results in behavioural change and physical fitness rates. As Somerville's study shows, this behavioural change was a temporary result and slowly declined in tandem with local programming resulting in no long-term effect. ParticipACTION's sustained efficacy came from the national campaigns, which did not effect behavioural change, but rather shaped national perceptions of appropriate bodies, health, and nation.

As this GIS analysis of the 1971-1976 print campaigns show, ParticipACTION under the direction of Keith McKerracher became one of the most successful not-for-profit marketing brands in Canadian history with influence spanning coast to coast to coast. But for many Canadians marginalized by the numerous social determinants of health, ParticipACTION's emphasis on 'awareness' effectively translated into awareness among urban Canadians in areas of influence with provincial governments amiable to ParticipACTION's programming. For rural, northern, First Nations, and first-generation Canadians, while ParticipACTION did affect dominant perceptions of acceptable bodies, health, and citizenship, its messages were simply a series of upbeat advertisements produced somewhere other than here, for people other than us.

# ParticipACTION's Canadian Newspaper Coverage 1971-1976



ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 5 – Civic Advocacy, Binary Logic, and Creating the New Enemy

“I still feel bad that I only lost a pound [this week], but it feels better to know that this fitness program is still working. Don Duncan, the Y’s executive director and I were talking one day during the week and he called me a fitness freak, I objected ... “You call me a jock”, I said, “and I’ll jump across this desk and throttle you”. “You see”, he said “a typical jock reaction”. So I’m a fitness freak. It could be worse, I could still be sitting around carrying all that extra weight and bulk. One of the nice things to come out of this program aside from the physical change is the encouragement I find I’m getting from people at the Y. Whatever the reason for them being members a number of people there understand and sympathize with what I’m going through.”<sup>355</sup>

– Dave Greber, ParticipACTION Medicine Hat Series

Situating ParticipACTION (1979-1989)

In 1978, McKerracher was replaced by Russ Kisby who led ParticipACTION until its closure in 1999. The Montreal office remained open with a small staff devoted to Quebec content and media generation. Jacques Gravel remained an ardent ParticipACTION supporter and eventual board member, with Francois Lagarde taking charge of the Montreal office after 1985. Between 1979 and 1989, ParticipACTION’s annual dedicated operating grant doubled to \$1 000 000 and remained stable until the end of the Progressive Conservative government’s tenure in 1993.<sup>356</sup> This funding allowed Kisby to expand the staff in both offices to a collective total of eleven, marking the largest dedicated staff ParticipACTION ever experienced. This period also marked the entrenchment of Kisby’s vision as the dominant view of ParticipACTION, and the agency’s most prolific period of independent campaign and project generation. Notable campaigns from this period included *The CrownLife Challenge* (1983-1995), *Project APEX* (1987-1995), *the Department of Defense Project EXPRESS* (1989-2001), *Fitness:*

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<sup>355</sup> Dave Greber, “New outlook on life”, *The Medicine Hat News*, (Monday March 3, 1975) 2.

<sup>356</sup> “ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000), Kisby’s Overviews, MG 291 2004-41 ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

*The Fact* (1980-1981), *ParticipACTION NETWORK* (1984-1986), *Vitality* (1989-1992), and *Body Break* (1989-1991).<sup>357</sup> The transition between McKerracher's administration and the first decade of Kisby's tenure was apparent in the lightening of marketing tone, the shift in staff background from business to public sector, and the disappearance of depictions of fat in ParticipACTION's programming.

### The Exclusionary Effects of Healthism

As ParticipACTION's messages emphasized a healthy nation and the performance of physical fitness as a demonstration of patriotic sentiment, the groups excluded from experiencing its local programming also experienced a form of exclusion from biological citizenship. Based in the current body of research in obesity studies<sup>358</sup>, including the works of Charlene Elliott, Jan Wright, Carol Lee Bacchi, and Chris Beasley, this chapter will outline how region, isolation, and ethnicity were not the only categories of difference that worked to determine how individual Canadians experienced ParticipACTION's programming and how ParticipACTION conceptualized belonging and patriotism.

Cold War anxiety played a significant role in the political decision-making that led to the founding of Sport Participation Canada. As outlined by Franca Iacovetta, the Cold War afforded those in positions of authority the ability to surveil and morally regulate a wide range of deviant behaviours.

whether “pinkos,” “spies,” or “treasonous lesbians” – all offered a means by which the body politic at home could be made to emulate the bourgeois values of obedience, conformity, and belief in capitalism. The state, courts, schools, reform groups, and professional and popular experts all pitched in to certain or eradicate

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<sup>357</sup> Kisby's Overviews, MG 291 2004-41 ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>358</sup> Charlene D. Elliott, “Big Persons, Small Voices: On Governance, Obesity, and the Narrative of the Failed Citizen”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 41:3 (Fall 2007) 134-149. Jan Wright, Doune Macdonald, Lyndal Groom, “Physical Activity and Young People: Beyond Participation”, *The Routledge physical education reader*, edited by Richard Bailey and David Kirk, (New York, Routledge, 2009) 103-122. Carol Lee Bacchi & Chris Beasley, “Citizen bodies: is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?”, *Critical Social Policy*, 22:2 (2002) 325.

alleged “threats” or “enemies within” who might contaminate the wider society.<sup>359</sup>

ParticipACTION was a moral regulator of deviant activity performed on the body politic with national implications for Canada’s identity. This agenda proved an exceptionally effective justification for ParticipACTION’s public funding and continued support within the private sector. As anxieties regarding the Cold War began to wane, ParticipACTION turned to a rather convenient and emerging social menace to justify its continued federal funding, namely fat or obesity. Wendy Mitchinson has revealed that public health concerns about the perceived national threat of fat and obesity long pre-dated the post-war period,<sup>360</sup> but for ParticipACTION, a philosophical shift in marketing strategy beginning in 1980 signalled the adoption of this well-established social ill, effectively supplanting Cold War anxiety as the justification for ParticipACTION’s continued public relevance. By charting depictions of fat in ParticipACTION print and television programming, this chapter will explore the social marketing tactics used to build ParticipACTION’s brand in the 1970s and how, once the brand was well established with Canadians, the strategy shifted to what Paul Rutherford has termed binary logic<sup>361</sup> in marketing: offering fat as the constructed problem and ParticipACTION as the low commitment, enjoyable, and easily attainable solution. This format proved highly effective as a form of prescriptive literature, outlining what a healthy and happy Canadian should resemble.

### ParticipACTION Medicine Hat

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<sup>359</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 19.

<sup>360</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, *Body Failure: Medical views of women, 1900-1950*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>361</sup> Paul Rutherford, *The New Icons? The Art of Television Advertising*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 5-6.

In fall 1974, Medicine Hat, AB, became one of many Canadian communities that contacted ParticipACTION in the hopes of establishing itself as a demonstration city similar to the pilot project in Saskatoon. As mentioned in Chapter 3, when faced with a barrage of requests and a limited staff to fulfill them, the administration of ParticipACTION made a conscious decision to step back from the community pilot project model to focus its resources on national advertising campaigns. This re-defining of ParticipACTION's mandate did not preclude the support of local communities in promoting its physical fitness message, but simply stated that beyond information, the national organization would not be able to provide any free logistical support to community-based initiatives. Rebuffed but undeterred, the City of Medicine Hat lobbied the provincial government of Alberta, specifically Horst Schmid, Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, to offer ParticipACTION a consulting contract to support a local initiative.<sup>362</sup> With a \$55 000 incentive, ParticipACTION agreed to the provincial government's terms and, beginning in February of 1975, built and supported a three-year community pilot project in Medicine Hat.<sup>363</sup> Thus, ParticipACTION Medicine Hat was established with provincial government support and run by a small group of influential gatekeeper volunteers looking to promote physical activity in their community.

#### The Greber Series

In the spring of 1975, Dave Greber, a young freelance writer, was contracted by *The Medicine Hat Times* to write a series of articles on physical fitness. Greber's previous body of work had been described as witty, self-effacing, and funny, just the tone ParticipACTION Medicine Hat sought to convey. Over a series of twelve weeks, Greber captured in word and

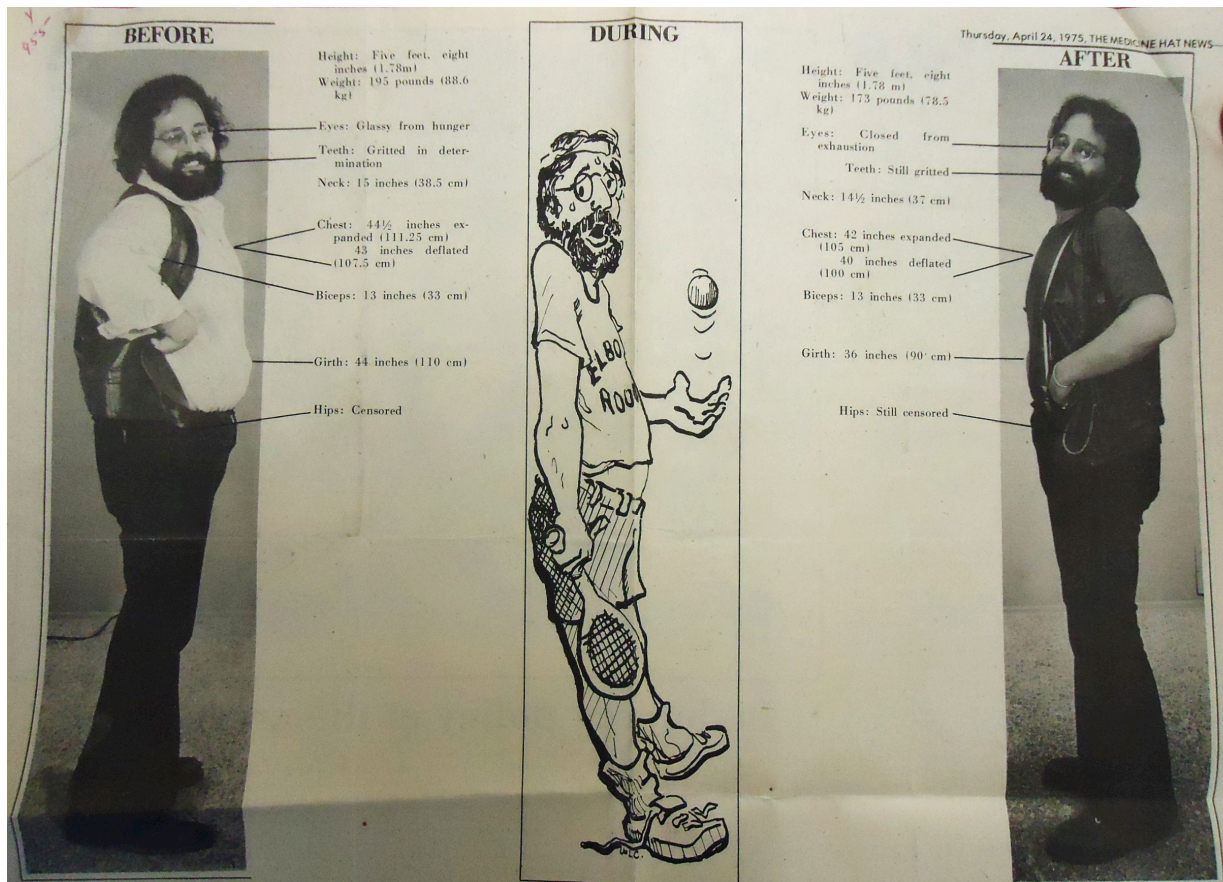
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<sup>362</sup> "Participaction granted funds", *Medicine Hat News*, February 4, 1975, 18. Clipping Collection, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.



image his “battle with the bulge”<sup>364</sup>, discussing his diet, his physical fitness routine and his efforts to get his co-workers involved with his weight-loss project. Greber’s goal was to lose 30 pounds, and at a height of 5’8”, reach his perceived ideal weight of 165 lbs.



In his fifth week, Greber reached a weight loss plateau and wrote an article entitled, “New outlook on life”, which is quoted at the top of this chapter. At the beginning of the series Greber’s body could be described as a failed body project: he was clinically obese and led a sedentary lifestyle. As outlined by Charlene Elliott in her exploration of obesity and citizenship in Canada, “failed body project[s]” are equally positioned to that of the “failed citizen” with

<sup>364</sup> Dave Greber, “And what is the measurement of a man?”, *The Medicine Hat News*, April 24, 1975, 3, Clipping Collection, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

Canada's obese being denoted as "lesser citizens" as a result of their physical classification.<sup>365</sup>

Greber was not only living a 'deviant' lifestyle who was not in control of his own body, he was also failing to fulfill his obligations as a 'good citizen' in the Canadian context. As the series progressed, Greber continually mentioned how much his self-esteem was lifting, how supportive and helpful everyone was being, and that he would never return to his "sloth and gluttony"<sup>366</sup>.

Evoking religious fervour and language, Greber was on the preverbal road to Damascus and had seen the light regarding his previously deviant ways. That Greber experienced extensive positive reinforcement from his colleagues as well as YMCA and ParticipACTION staff speaks to Jan Wright's theory regarding the use of institutions such as workplaces, schools, and families as bio-pedagogues "using praise and shame alongside expert knowledge to urge conformity to weight norms."<sup>367</sup> This combination of praise and shame proved a potent mixture in assuring Greber's continued adherence to his weight-loss regime. In his final article, entitled "And what is the measurement of a man", Greber reflected on his achievements. He had wilfully changed the habitual nature of his daily activities and "won the battle"<sup>368</sup> against "sloth and gluttony"<sup>369</sup>. Although he was eight pounds short of his target at the end of the series, Greber decided to continue with his daily exercise regime and strict diet until his body "signals it has had enough", the goal then becoming to maintain this weight for the rest of his life. Greber specifically thanked Keith McKerracher and Russ Kisby<sup>370</sup> for their help and information.

### Greber, Body Control, and Gender

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<sup>365</sup> Charlene D. Elliott, "Big Persons, Small Voices: On Governance, Obesity, and the Narrative of the Failed Citizen", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 41:3 (Fall 2007) 134-149.

<sup>366</sup> Dave Greber, "And what is the measurement of a man?", *The Medicine Hat Times*, (April 24, 1975) 3.

<sup>367</sup> Jan Wright, Doune Macdonald, Lyndal Groom, "Physical Activity and Young People: Beyond Participation", *The Routledge physical education reader*, edited by Richard Bailey and David Kirk, (New York, Routledge, 2009) 103-122.

<sup>368</sup> Greber, 3.

<sup>369</sup> Greber, 3.

<sup>370</sup> Greber, 3.

“And what is the measurement of a man” marks a provocative title for the final addition to Greber’s weight loss series. There exists a rich body of literature outlining the gendered framing of size and weight offering many examples of women not conforming to widely held perceptions of the ideal female form being silenced and marginalized in the media.<sup>371</sup> A new movement of fat studies scholars and political activists has led a ‘coming out’ of sorts for this visibly marginalized community.<sup>372</sup> In this context, Greber’s series may seem notable or unique, but as Carol Bacchi and Chris Beasley have illustrated, the feminization of fat may in some instances mark the false reading of a more complex binary power relationship.

The ‘control over body’ versus ‘controlled by body’ demarcation lines up with a series of dichotomies: mind/body, autonomy/protection, active/passive, culture/nature, consumers/patients, elective/therapy, sameness/difference.<sup>373</sup>

Bacchi and Beasley suggest that feminist scholars have been preoccupied with artificially placing men/women as another paring in this binary construct, but in their findings regarding reproductive rights and legislation, women can be found on either side of this schema. Greber’s journey can easily be placed within this mechanism. It is clear that at the outset, Greber could be constructed as representing an individual being controlled by his body but, by the end, he had effectively regained control over his body. With comments such as his final title assessing the qualities of manhood, an associated photo under a shower in a wet t-shirt, and his final image with muscles flexed about his shoulders, Greber humourously played with tropes of the physically fit male body and male heterosexuality. While there is no evidence to suggest that Greber’s gender was taken into consideration when he was offered the writing contract. He was simply depicted as an overweight journalist. Any other identification came secondary in the

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<sup>371</sup> Charlene D. Elliott, “Big Persons, Small Voices: On Governance, Obesity, and the Narrative of the Failed Citizen”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 41: 3 (Fall 2007) 140.

<sup>372</sup> Elliott, 140.

<sup>373</sup> Carol Lee Bacchi & Chris Beasley, “Citizen bodies: is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?”, *Critical Social Policy*, 22:2 (2002) 325.

minds of ParticipACTION Medicine Hat organizers.

### Placing Greber in a National Context

A provincial grant funded Dave Greber's series, and he received direct support from Keith McKerracher and Russ Kisby due to ParticipACTION's consulting obligations. On a national level, ParticipACTION was always glad to provide information to any news outlet looking to write or broadcast a 'news' story that promoted ParticipACTION's physical fitness aims. Commissioned for a community newspaper, not as a government advertisement, Greber's series was filed as a news item with all the accountability and reliability such a designation denotes. This marketing-as-news model added credibility and authority to ParticipACTION's status as the 'experts' in Canadian health promotion and legitimacy to their positioning as gatekeepers of health and wellness on a national scale.

Greber's news series and the messaging with which he chose to construct his weight-loss journey stands as an important visual example of the ways Canadians in the 1970s viewed physical fitness and its relationship with masculinity, citizenship, morality, and personal control over the body. Greber was not an expert in the field of health or physical fitness. His perceptions of weight and health were entirely personal in nature, yet he drew on the values to which he had been exposed in the society in which he lived. As a result, Greber's depictions of what constituted fitness and health and the barriers to achieving these statuses are an extrapolation of societal perceptions and norms of the time.

In many ways, ParticipACTION and its programming was a wolf in sheep's clothing. ParticipACTION's happy, funny, reassuring advertisements and independent brand put Canadians at ease and made them more amenable to government's intended message and desired behaviour modification. It is doubtful that Dave Greber's message of weight loss and physical

activity in *The Medicine Hat News* would have been as well received in a government brochure or pamphlet. Indeed, Greber as a respected independent writer may have turned down a similar contract from the Ministry of National Health and Welfare.<sup>374</sup> This reality justifies the desire to keep ParticipACTION at arms length from the federal government.

### The Clipping Collection Through Another Lens

Greber's series appears in "Book 5 General" of the Clipping Collection. While Chapter 4 approached this collection as a source of spatial analysis, this chapter explores depictions of anxiety and fat in ParticipACTION programming and applies a critical content analysis. Of the 1016 articles and advertisements, the majority fall into two categories: (1) Government Support of ParticipACTION's goals and (2) Local Physical Fitness Events. The first category includes several articles from federal, provincial, and municipal officials extolling the virtues of the ParticipACTION message of physical fitness and adding to the consensus concerning the 'crisis' in national health. These articles include a well-publicized image of Governor General Roland Michener jogging with children that was featured in newspapers such as *La Presse*, and several pieces quote Lester B. Pearson and his dedication to Sport Participation Canada's aims.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Greber was dedicated to freelance journalism, taught on the subject at Mount Royal College in Calgary. After his death he was honoured by his peers with the founding of the Dave Greber Freelance Writers Award, presented annual to a Canadian freelance author dedicated to social justice. His long time partner Shirley Dunn was informally interviewed for this study and confirmed that Greber would not have worked for the government directly.

<sup>375</sup> "Governor General Roland Michener Jogging with Kids", *La Presse*, page unknown, April. 19. 1973. "Will Probe Junior Hockey, Want Sports Participation", *Peterborough Observer*, page unknown, December 13, 1972. Clippings Collection, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.



The second category includes mostly local tournaments depicting young, fit individuals enjoying a variety of sports and leisure activities.



Only 28 articles (3%) featured individuals who did not conform to ParticipACTION's ideal image of health, and twelve of these comprise Dave Greber's series of articles discussing his weight-loss journey.<sup>376</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Common terms that appeared in this search included: Fat, obese, flabby, girth, pot (as in belly), weight loss, *poids*, and *gigantesque*.

This number from the Clipping Services Collection<sup>377</sup> seems exceptionally low in retrospect, but it is actually relatively high when compared to the ParticipACTION Archives Campaign Collection from 1976 to 2001<sup>378</sup> where images and articles discussing those who did not conform to body image ideals all but disappear from later programming.<sup>379</sup> Employing the historical theoretical approach of ‘reading the silences’<sup>380</sup>, we might ask where did the fat people go? Four interlocking causes contributed to why individuals perceived as overweight no longer fit within the ParticipACTION dialectic and why ParticipACTION gradually silenced these voices.

#### International Successes and Failures in Government Health Promotion Programming

In 1974, Federal Minister of National Health and Welfare Marc Lalonde drafted a report that was based in the nascent school of thought in health theorizing known as ‘Health Promotion’. Its advocates felt that government funds earmarked for health could be more effectively used if the emphasis shifted to focus on the individual health choices of Canadians. Rather than treating ill patients, health promotion advocated preventative medicine through healthier lifestyle choice. Lalonde’s report, entitled *A new perspective on the health of Canadians* (hereafter to be referred to as the Lalonde Report) pointed to four key indicators of health: human biology, environment (both physical and social), lifestyle, and health care organization. His report stated that while previous federal funding had focused on human

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<sup>377</sup> Clipping Books 1-31, ParticipACTION Collection, University of Saskatchewan Archives, MG 291-2004.

<sup>378</sup> ParticipACTION Campaign Collection, MG 291 2004-41 (1-13), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>379</sup> In 1981, ParticipACTION produced a second claymation advertisement entitled “Harvey Lazybones” featuring an overweight man in a recliner, mimicking the *Life. Be In It!* advertisements featuring Norm and Livy. This TV spot and a single article entitled “Feeling Fat in a thin world”, found in the April 1989 ParticipACTION Chatelaine supplement are the only two overt depictions or discussions of Fat found in the ParticipACTION collections interrogated for this study.

<sup>380</sup> P. Singh, “Reading the silences within critical feminist theory.” in P. Reebbody, S. Muspratt & A. Luke, eds. *Constructing critical literacies*, (New York: Hampton Press. 1997) 77-94. ; Estelle B. Freedman, “ ‘The Burning of Letters Continues’: Elusive Identities and the Historical Constructions of Sexuality”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 9:4 (1998) 181-200.

biology and health care organizations, a new strategy must emphasize “the social determinants of health”<sup>381</sup>. The Lalonde Report proved to be a foundational document in international public health theorizing. Here was a federal government seemingly willing to acknowledge and address the underlying social disparities that contributed to the ailing health of its citizenry. Overnight, Canada became a world leader in public health theorizing. Canadian public health professionals were sought the world over, and Canadian policies and promotional campaigns were watched intently. This status continued for over a decade and resulted in Ottawa hosting the 1st International Conference on health promotion in 1986. In reality, according to health promotion scholars Michel O’Neill, Ann Pederson, Sophie Dupere, and Irving Rootman, this international reputation in health theorizing did not translate into innovative implementation, nor did Canada’s reputation as a celebrated federal jurisdiction translate into a commitment to local or provincial programming.<sup>382</sup>

As well intentioned as health promotion seemed at the time, it did not necessarily serve the best interests of the majority of Canadians. First, it gave health experts and social scientists state-sanctioned permission to monitor the day-to-day lifestyle choices of Canadians. Second, a common reading of this program shifted the onus and responsibility for maintaining one’s health from community and state to the individual alone. This emphasis of individual responsibility was made overt in the influential 1974 article written for the journal *Daedalus* by John Knowles, physician and president of the Rockefeller Foundation. It was Knowles’ view that the “blame for an unhealthy society [lies] on the personal habits of individuals”.<sup>383</sup> He believed that people

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<sup>381</sup> Marc Lalonde, *A new Perspective on the Health of Canadians*. (Ottawa: National Department of Health and Wellness, 1974) 41. Original used as Psycho-Social Determinants of Health, the psycho was removed in all later publications and outshoot research.

<sup>382</sup> Michel O’Neill, et al. *Health promotion in Canada: critical perspective, 2nd edition*. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2007) 162.

<sup>383</sup> J.H. Knowles, “The responsibility of the individual.” *Daedalus*, 106 (1977) 57.



needed to stop depending on organized medicine and government medical services to improve their health and instead take personal responsibility for their health choices.

The concept of victim blaming has continued to developed alongside the limits-of-medicine debate.<sup>384</sup> Based on the idea that the benefits of modern medicine have been oversold, it posits that a healthy lifestyle is of paramount importance in personal disease prevention. As Robert Crawford posits, following the progression of this ideology, “Living a long life is essentially a do-it-yourself proposition.”<sup>385</sup> By placing the onus of health on the individual rather than society at large, this ideology suggests that resources should be taken away from traditional post-war social programs in favour of health promotion strategies that can effectively communicate to the public their personal responsibility in maintaining their own bodies. This line of thought speaks directly to the pathologizing of obesity and sedentary living as a symptom of social failure, western decadence, overindulgence, and a society in decay.<sup>386</sup> Crawford suggests that this shift to personal onus rather than relying on the support of the economic system works to obscure the class struggle that intrinsically informs the social determinants of health. Applying this classist and neo-liberal ideology, the depiction of fat people in ParticipACTION advertisements was incongruent because these individuals should be held to account for failing to take personal responsibility for their health. Following this construct, I would suggest that the marketers at ParticipACTION did not position fat people in the public advertising of a brand that emphasized fun, happiness, and rewards for bodily adherence to the message.

While no written record exists overtly stating that ParticipACTION deliberately avoided the use of fat people in their advertising, Don Bailey alluded to such thinking in an oral history

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<sup>384</sup> Robert Crawford, “You are Dangerous to Your Health: The Ideology and Politics of Victim Blaming”, *Embodying Inequality: Epidemiologic Perspectives*, Edited by Nancy Krieger, Policy, Politics, Health and Medicine Series, Vicente Navarro, Series Editor, Baywood Publishing Company, Inc. Amityville, New York, (2005) 80.

<sup>385</sup> Crawford, 89.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 90.

interview.<sup>387</sup> Bailey suggested that ParticipACTION acted as a template for other countries looking to create national health promotion campaigns. Bailey pointed to two national organizations that had a similar national prevalence as ParticipACTION: the American President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport (1953-present)<sup>388</sup> and Australia's *Life. Be In It.* program (1975-2001). Not surprisingly, Bailey suggested that ParticipACTION was the most successful of the three due in large part to the type of spokespeople and messages each employed. The American PCPFS advertisements almost exclusively featured famous athletes such as Billie Jean King and Arnold Schwarzenegger.<sup>389</sup> While this tactic conformed to the market strategy of selling success, it did not allow for physical fitness to be perceived by the American public as attainable for the 'everyman'. Although popular and well known, the campaign did not translate into a widespread increase in physical fitness.<sup>390</sup> Sports were still perceived as the domain of the elite athlete and not the average American. In comparison, ParticipACTION made a concerted effort to avoid the use of the word 'sport' in its advertising and did not employ celebrities of any kind as spokespersons. As Bailey explains, "we wanted physical fitness to be accessible"<sup>391</sup>.

While the American program's messaging made physical fitness seem too exclusive, the Australian model became more inclusive and accepting than the organizers had intended. Launched in 1975, *Life. Be In It.* advertisements featured an overweight middle-aged man named Norm, created to represent the 'Norm-al' Australian man. The series featured Norm sitting in

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<sup>387</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Donald Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>388</sup> An earlier version of this organization existed as early as 1953, but the PCPFS expanded its mandate to include the general public, not just youth and children, starting in 1974. This speaks to the same Health Promotion trend that resulted in the founding of ParticipACTION.

<sup>389</sup> The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, *President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: Council Members and Executives (July 1956- May 2006), Fifty Years Promoting Health and Fitness*. (2006) 56.

<sup>390</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Donald Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

front of a television making jokes about his fitness while his slim and fit wife, Livvy, always clad in legwarmers and leotard, acted as Norm's straight man and conveyor of *Life. Be In It.* messaging.<sup>392</sup> The objective of these ads was to motivate Australian men and women to re-evaluate their physical fitness and activity and change their personal behaviour. Like ParticipACTION, the Norm ads emphasized humour and appealed to the Australian proclivity for using positive and light-hearted prescriptive messaging. The Norm ads became exceptionally popular, and Norm himself became nationally beloved. T-shirts, mugs, and Halloween costumes celebrating Norm, but interestingly not Livvy, became an ingrained part of Australian popular culture, and many Australians claim that Norm and his blue-haired wife were the uncredited template for the American television show *The Simpsons*' lead couple of Homer and Marge. Rather than recognizing the unhealthy nature of Norm's sedentary lifestyle, the Australian public embraced Norm and subverted the government's intended messaging.<sup>393</sup>

In many ways, the American and Australian programs represent two extremes in national social marketing campaigns based in the health promotion approach. The first, the American PCPFS, constructed physical fitness as too exacting, too exclusive, and unattainable for most Americans. The second, *Life. Be In It.*, demonstrated that Norm was extremely funny, nationally beloved, and had a beautiful wife, all while keeping his potbelly and continuing his sedentary lifestyle. In the Australian case, physical fitness was a component of success, but by no means a requirement for happiness.

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<sup>392</sup> *Life. Be in it.* Norm (Obesity) advertisement. Livvy is rarely named in the ads, but this 30 second clip on 'obesity' features her name. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNjEge3Awl8> Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

<sup>393</sup> "'*Life. Be in it.* ' Norm returns for Australia Day Honours" Press Release, Thursday, January 26, 2012.

Canada's ParticipACTION consciously positioned itself between these two extremes.<sup>394</sup> By featuring unknown fit, young, attractive Canadians having fun and participating in accessible physical activities, ParticipACTION avoided both the American and Australian pitfalls. ParticipACTION's physical fitness objectives were displayed as easily attainable for all Canadians, yet constructed as absolutely mandatory for one to be a happy and successful citizen.

### Social Marketing, Binary Logic, and Buying Dreams

During the 1970s, ParticipACTION employed binary marketing in many depictions of fat. According to Paul Rutherford, binary ads "employ antonyms such as ugly and beautiful, masculine and feminine, high and low, and so on... the result is a simplified and compelling portrait of life that evokes an aesthetic response from consumers."<sup>395</sup> One cartoon that appeared in *The Toronto Sun* is a poignant example.<sup>396</sup> The scene is set in an average Canadian living room. Husband and wife are relaxing for the evening, not having taken off their business attire: he in a loosened shirt and tie, she in a crumpled short dress. They are both slouched down in their matching recliners and both present ample potbellies. The white, seemingly middle-class couple is watching the hockey game. The chairs' headrests display large maple leaves and the words "OOOOH Canada!" embroidered beneath. Thrown on the floor in front of the man is a newspaper with the headline "MUNRO LAUNCHES KEEP FIT PROGRAM". The man half-heartedly raises his hand and the caption reads, "No, no. I'LL get up for the beers – I need the exercise." If the link between national pride and the failure of this couple to understand their patriotic duty is not yet clear, the comically large refrigerator carries the brand of 'Volkscooler'.

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<sup>394</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Donald Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>395</sup> Paul Rutherford, *The New Icons? The Art of Television Advertising*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 5-6.

<sup>396</sup> 'Political Cartoon', *Toronto Sun*, Friday, December 17, 1971. Page unknown. Clipping Collection, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

The excessive nature of their lives, represented by the refrigerator, is not only hurting Canada but, through conspicuous consumption, is benefiting another nation. This cartoon represents the first half of the binary: Canadian patriotism is at risk because Canadians have failed to adhere to the physical requirements of good citizenship. Here is the insurmountable problem that needs fixing, and ParticipACTION presents the solution. “Run, Walk, Cycle” Let’s Get Canada Moving Again!”<sup>397</sup> The slogan is short and to the point. Playing on nostalgia, it harkens to an unspecified and arguably mythic time in the past when Canada exemplified a fit nation, and with its declarative verbs, the slogan demands all Canadians meet this patriotic call-to-arms. This depiction is representative of all the entries discussing fat in the 1970s collection, which includes buttons stating “ParticipACTION: A Rhythm Method of Girth Control”<sup>398</sup> and news headlines such as “Waistland: Canada going to Pot” sit prominently next to an image of an anonymous and intentionally depersonalized torso presenting a protruding potbelly.



In August, 1979, ParticipACTION presented the “fat vs. fit” 30-second television spot that employed claymation artistry to demonstrate how an overweight letter “a” found in the word “fat” could exercise and eat healthy foods to become an “i” and through these efforts change into

<sup>397</sup> “60 year-old-Swede” tagline, *The ParticipACTION Archive Project* website. University of Saskatchewan, *Early Years (1973-1979)- The 60 year old Swede*. Accessed December 14, 2012 <http://www.usask.ca/archives/participaction/english/motivate/swede.html>

<sup>398</sup> Clipping Collection, 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

a much happier word. This advertisement is perhaps the most tangible example of Rutherford's described binary marketing. Through direct comparison, fat is portrayed as unpatriotic, ugly, slovenly, and a result of one's own actions and inaction. It is a serious problem needing fixing on a national scale, and ParticipACTION's messaging offers the easy, upbeat, and low-commitment solution.

The main marketing objective of the ParticipACTION 1973-1979 national campaign was to increase "awareness of the inactive and unfit nature of Canadians, the health implications, plus the purpose of this new ParticipACTION organization."<sup>399</sup> This statement and its wording speaks to the decisive and prescriptive nature of ParticipACTION advertising. The message was clear and concise: a fat and sedentary lifestyle was constructed as the paragon of unacceptable living, and ParticipACTION's recipe for healthy living was presented as its foil. By 1979, this binary relationship had become so successfully entrenched in the collective culture of Canadians that the overt depiction of fat people became no longer necessary or even desirable.

Starting in 1980, ParticipACTION shifted marketing gears and no longer focused on "awareness" and "branding".<sup>400</sup> With these ideas now well established, the organization began the daunting task to "motivate"<sup>401</sup> Canadians to change their behaviour in order to have the lifestyle they ought to want and deserve. This tactic of selling success is perhaps best explained again by Paul Rutherford who suggested that advertisers tend to "sell back to us our dreams"<sup>402</sup>. With campaigns like *Oh What A Feeling!* and *Participation Makes Perfect*, ParticipACTION inundated Canadians with images of young, attractive, smiling, physically fit people participating

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<sup>399</sup> *The ParticipACTION Archive Project* website. University of Saskatchewan, *Early Years (1973-1979): TV, Radio and Print Media*. Accessed December 14, 2012

<http://www.usask.ca/archives/participation/english/motivate/theearlyyears.html>

<sup>400</sup> Kisby's Overviews, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Rutherford, 5.

in fun athletic activities. This marketing shift coincided with Olivia Newton John's 1981 release of "Physical,"<sup>403</sup> the rise of the aerobics craze, and as Jenny Ellison suggests, the entrenchment of a "new normative femininity" establishing that a "healthy body was a slender body".<sup>404</sup> Canadians were being told that in order to be happy, they must look physically fit. They must buy into this lifestyle and partake in the conspicuous consumption it accompanies.<sup>405</sup> It stands to reason that people who were fat could not appear in ads happily participating in one of these activities. According to the messages reaching Canadians, such people had failed as citizens, were not happy with their lives, and therefore had no place in ParticipACTION's upbeat advertising.

#### Nationalism, The Cold War, and the 'New' Enemy Within

While ParticipACTION messaging focused on the responsibility of the individual to attain physical fitness, for Canadians it did hold broader national implications. Several articles featured in newspapers across the country re-enforced the danger of Canada's growing weight problem. The *Regina Leader Post* printed, "Most Canadians in bad shape"; Granby, QC's, *La Voix de L'Est* provided a negative comparison between Canada and developing nations claiming, « Nous sommes en plus mauvais condition physique que les gens des pays sous-developpés »; the *London Free Press* continued in this vein of national comparisons by stating that "Canadians [are] below Americans in physical fitness"; and the *Windsor Star* ran a headline story which read, "How Canadians rate on international scale: poorly." While all of these articles discussed 'fat' as the key problem plaguing the Canadian nation in these international comparisons, it was the *Charlottetown Patriot* that offered the most overt link between a national identity in crisis

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<sup>403</sup> Olivia Newton-John, "Physical", *Physical*, (MCA Records, Released September 1981).

<sup>404</sup> Jenny Ellison "Not Jane Fonda: Aerobics for Fat Women Only", in *The Fat Studies Reader*, Esther Rothblum and Sandra Solovay ed. (New York University Press, 2009) 312.

<sup>405</sup> Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger, Eric Oliver, and Glenn Gaesser, The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: public health crisis or moral panic? *International Journal of Epidemiology*, (2006) 35:60.

and fat by declaring, “Smarten up Canadians, You’re Getting Too Fat!”<sup>406</sup> This nationalist rhetoric proved a highly effective marketing tool by appealing to individual Canadians to perform their patriotism through physical activity. Consequently, references to Canadian nationalism became a mainstay of ParticipACTION advertising.

As stated by J. L. Gear, finding a common enemy against whom to rally seems key to this continuing need for government programming in physical fitness.<sup>407</sup> By 1980, with Cold War anxiety waning, the case for government support of physical fitness programming needed to once again find a new enemy in order to justify its continued relevance. As stated in the *Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Moncton Times*, Canada was now “Fighting against Fat” and waging a “War On Flabbiness”.<sup>408</sup>

Based on the cultural unpacking of ParticipACTION’s programming and advertisements, a strong case can be made for fat becoming this new enemy within Canadian society. In the 1970s, ParticipACTION’s programming had laid the groundwork, constructing fat people as a threatening trifecta. They were unpatriotic, having effectively let down the nation during the national sports fanaticism of the Cold War. They were solely to blame, as respected medical experts stated, for failing to achieve a socially acceptable body type. And they were made an invisible menace, as their depiction and presence was removed from any positive discussion of health in the Canadian media. ParticipACTION, effectively banished the fat of Canada to the margins of society, or at least from ParticipACTION’s depictions of a healthy and happy one.

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<sup>406</sup> “Most Canadians in bad shape”, *Regina Leader Post*, December, 25, 1971. “Nous sommes en plus mauvais condition physique que les gens des pays sous-developpés.”, *La Voix de L’Est*, Granby Quebec, December 16, 1971. “Canadians below Americans in physical fitness.” *London Free Press*, December 2, 1974, “How Canadians rate on international scale: poorly”, *Windsor Star*, November 20, 1974. “Smarten up Canadians, you’re getting too Fat.” *Charlottetown Patriot*, April 13, 1973. Clipping Books, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>407</sup> James L. Gear, “Factors Influencing the Development of Government Sponsored Physical Fitness Programmes in Canada from 1850 to 1972.” *Canadian Journal of History of Sport & Physical Education*. 4:2 (1973) 2-25.

<sup>408</sup> “War On Flabbiness” *Moncton Times*, January 22, 1972, “Fighting against Fat”, *Winnipeg Tribune*, February 19, 1972. Gear, 2-25.



Unpatriotic, guilty, and social pariahs, fat became the ideal enemy against whom to rally, especially as the USSR seemed increasingly less threatening.

### McKerracher, Kisby, and Fat

The people behind ParticipACTION, such as Russ Kisby, were actively involved in constructing fat as the central threat to Canadian society, but their intent was to motivate. Speaking with his employees, peers, and adversaries, no individual interviewed for this study described Kisby and his dedication to ParticipACTION's physical fitness message with anything less than respect and adulation. Frequent adjectives used to describe his approach included enthusiastic, heart-felt, positive, fun, and passionate. While McKerracher's pre-1978 advertisements employed more sarcastic, witty, and edgy humour that included depictions of fat, Kisby's post-1978 messaging relied upon positive depictions of healthy living, modelling rather than comparing lifestyle choices or benefits. This difference in emphasis underscores the difference in the professional backgrounds and personalities of these two leaders. For McKerracher, depictions of fat worked exceptionally well in establishing fat as the negative component of a highly effective binary marketing relationship. By contrast, Kisby was averse to employing depictions of fat people in a negative light. Interviews revealed that Russ Kisby had struggled with his weight during his childhood and young adulthood, only achieving ParticipACTION's ideal of fitness once established in his career.<sup>409</sup> Kisby exemplifies the finding of Kristina Mikulova and Michal Simecka in that the fervour and missionary zeal of late converts to a cause, faith, or religion can rarely be matched.<sup>410</sup> Kisby's personal history compounded with his positive and amenable personality helps to explain why depictions of fat

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<sup>409</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Merle Kisby, October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*, ongoing dissertation research. Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Donald Bailey, September 17, 2012 10:00 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*, ongoing dissertation research.

<sup>410</sup> Kristina Mikulova & Michal Simecka, "Norm Entrepreneurs and Atlanticist Foreign Policy in Central and Eastern Europe: The Missionary Zeal of Recent Converts", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:6, (August 2013) 1192-1216.

no longer had a place in ParticipACTION advertising after 1980. While his personal reasons and positive marketing approach may explain the omission of depictions of fat from ParticipACTION's programming, an unintended sub-text was established nonetheless. Fat was made invisible and, building on the binary relationship established under McKerracher, fat became an invisible menace threatening the nation.

Returning finally to Dave Greber, his series represents a touchstone in Canada's physical fitness and weight loss culture embodied by ParticipACTION programming. In his first article, entitled "Fat Farm Report", Greber presented readers with an annotated full-length photo of his body, reporting every dimension of his frame (except for his hips, which were coyly reported as CENSORED). Each week, Greber reported on his progress in changing his eating habits and participating in a wide variety of physical activities. By describing his journey as a fight to win "the battle [against] sloth and gluttony"<sup>411</sup>, Greber's series demonstrates that even as early as 1975, fat was being established as a personal enemy to challenge and beat. Although Greber employed the terms sloth and gluttony as a humorous device, the subtextual link between morality (embodied by two deadly sins) and fitness was still effectively re-enforced.

In his final piece, "What is the measurement of a man?"<sup>412</sup> Greber played into the binary marketing model by offering both before and after pictures to his weight loss journey. Greber was effusive about his new body and how it made him feel.

If in any way, some people in Medicine Hat and Redcliff have been moved to move because of this series, I feel pretty good. That's what it was, in part, designed to do. Good luck, and keep it up.... Oh yes, the changes in me to date go under the heading 'phenomenal' – I can run and enjoy running a mile; I can work out for hours, and enjoy the workout. I feel better and look better – I also know I

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<sup>411</sup> Dave Greber, "And what is the measurement of a man?", *The Medicine Hat Times*, (April 24, 1975) 3.

<sup>412</sup> Even this title, which is a play on a famous quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's 1963 speech, *Strength to Love*, Chapter 4, Section 3 "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.", entrenches the need to challenge a constructed enemy.

have to keep this up. Frankly, I don't mind, I have never felt this good in my entire life, and I want to stay this way. There is a feeling of exhilaration, unlike any other get [sic], from being able to do the things I can do now. On top of that I'm much more relaxed, feel a lot looser, and feel I can handle life's little crises much more easily as they arise. Philosophy aside, and everything taken into consideration, I think *ParticipACTION Medicine Hat* was the best thing to happen to me in years. I've learned a great deal about fitness, good health, nutrition and exercise. So on I go, continuing the battle, the toughest one I'll ever have to face in my life, getting fitter and staying there.<sup>413</sup>

Greber's "battle" was one that ParticipACTION hoped that every Canadian would personally wage, not only for themselves but for the betterment of the nation. The selection of Greber for this freelance contract was also a shrewd selection on the part of ParticipACTION Medicine Hat. While fat was socially constructed as a predominantly feminized concern, Greber, with his disarming and playful style while engaging in weight lifting, running, and team sports, welcomed both men and women to consider their personal size. This message was intended for all Canadians irrespective of gender. As an example, Greber's series exists at a poignant moment in Canada's health promotion culture and ParticipACTION programming. In all likelihood given the historical trends drawn from the Campaign Collection, his series would not have been published after 1979. Fat individuals were tolerated in the 1970s as the first half of a binary marketing strategy or as a body in transition. By the 1980s, Greber's humourously upbeat series about the challenges of his weight loss no longer conformed to ParticipACTION's crafted brand. With this binary relationship established and ParticipACTION entrenched as its solution, the overt depiction of fat people no longer served its marketing strategy. The window for depictions of fat people in ParticipACTION advertising had closed. Fat had effectively usurped Cold War anxiety as the propelling justification for continuing federal funding of physical fitness and sport. In ParticipACTION programming, the new enemy was fat, and fat was unhappy, unsuccessful,

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<sup>413</sup> Dave Greber, "And what is the measurement of a man?", *The Medicine Hat Times*, (April 24, 1975) 3.

and invisible. This new established construct for ParticipACTION meant that many Canadians who did not conform to the prescribed healthy living regime either dismissed ParticipACTION's programming or internalized a private social memory of disappointment and shame. In either case, the adoption of this new social menace did little to meet ParticipACTION's objective of behaviour modification.

ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 6 – ParticipACTION’s Funding Model, Corporate Ethics, and Social Memory

There are no other public health-related marketing or media efforts at the national level, that have been sustained as long as ParticipACTION, anywhere in the world....the longevity of ParticipACTION is unrivaled in public health... The duration of ParticipACTION gives it rare status as an evidence-based sustained campaign. It demonstrated flexibility of operation and multi-sectoral capacity, working across agencies and with public or private partners, which probably contributed to its longer-term survival.<sup>414</sup>

Situating ParticipACTION (1989-1999)

The 1990s marked a period of rapid change for ParticipACTION as a corporate body. Between 1990 and 1994 the agency’s funding and staffing were stable. It experienced extensive brand recognition success due in large part to the *Body Break* series (1989-1991). Russ Kisby engaged in discussions with other national and provincial public health partners to create CAHPERD (Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance), further adding to the legitimacy of the industry and its perceived need as a public service. From all outward appearances ParticipACTION was thriving, but for those on the inside it was clear that more change was on the horizon. With the legitimacy of the health promotion profession established and the moral panic of the obesity crisis effectively entrenched, the public health industry was becoming dangerously crowded with numerous agencies competing for limited government funds. Beginning in 1994, ParticipACTION’s dedicated operating grant began to shrink, and Kisby had to reduce staff as a result. ParticipACTION’s dependence on program-specific government contracts also brought on the outsourcing of services with government employees of Health Canada working *with* ParticipACTION rather than *for* ParticipACTION. Both Montreal and Toronto offices remained open but with only four employees on staff at the

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<sup>414</sup> Adrian Bauman, Judith Madill, Cora Lynn Craig, Art Salmon, “ParticipACTION: This Mouse Roared, But Did It Get the Cheese?” Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S19.

time of its closure. The following two chapters chronicle this process of corporate evolution and decline in the final decade of ParticipACTION's operation and how its status as a trusted definer of national identity proved its last and most valuable asset to exploit.

ParticipACTION occupied a unique space compared to other organizations. Although it was created and funded by government, it was legally incorporated as a not-for-profit agency, allowing it to appear sufficiently at arms length to satisfy fears of being overly similar to Soviet sport agencies.<sup>415</sup> Yet unlike other not-for-profits or private corporations, ParticipACTION enjoyed a great deal of government support, both financial and political. This chapter explores the evolution of this economic structure and how, in the vacuum of sufficient government funding, President Russ Kisby turned to corporate sponsorship to an ever-greater degree in order to keep "the doors open and the lights on"<sup>416</sup>. As Francois Lagarde has written,

In the 1990s, ParticipACTION switched to survival mode due to tighter government funding combined with the fragmentation and dramatic changes in marketing practices, health communications, media and advertising, as well as increased competition and reduced support for PSAs.<sup>417</sup>

Despite ParticipACTION becoming increasingly dependent on corporate sponsors, no Phase 2 interviewees mentioned this sponsorship component in their recollections. By some mixture of media magic and memory omission, Canadian media consumers did not incorporate this component of ParticipACTION's reality into their collective memory. This lack of awareness regarding the corporate intrusion of ParticipACTION was exceptionally fortunate for the agency. As Bruce Kidd explains, an organization's legitimacy as a national emblem can be

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<sup>415</sup> Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful, and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) 8.

<sup>416</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>417</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION's Success", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21.

significantly tarnished by the perceived affiliation with corporate interests.<sup>418</sup> Fortunately for ParticipACTION's brand, or perhaps courtesy of the image it had already successfully projected, the agency appeared to remain above the fray of corporate influence, or at least that is what Canadians were guided to believe.

#### From 'Seed Money' to Critical Lifeline: ParticipACTION's Annual Government Grant

According to both Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien and Keith McKerracher, the initial start-up grant of \$262 000 for Sports Participation Canada in 1971<sup>419</sup> was 'seed money' and there was no presumption that the Ministry of National Health and Welfare made such funds available for subsequent years.<sup>420</sup> According to the "Funding and Media Exposure" annual breakdown reported by Russ Kisby, ParticipACTION was able to nearly double the government's investment in that initial year by generating \$471,000 in media exposure for ParticipACTION's message.<sup>421</sup> This projected number was generated using the Canadian Press Clipping Services collection and some kind of radio exposure calculations that do not seem to have survived in the archival collection. Based on this initial success, the Treasury Board channeled a grant for the 1972-1973 fiscal year of \$300 000 to which McKerracher returned ten-fold.<sup>422</sup> Under the administration of Keith McKerracher (1972-1978), the delivery of this annual grant was never assumed but, based on the growing return on investment and obvious success in the Canadian media, ParticipACTION's funding was always renewed and increased. During its "peak years,"

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<sup>418</sup> Bruce Kidd, *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists and Socialists: Shaping Canadian Sport in the 1920s and 1930s*, (PhD diss., York University, 1990) 4.

<sup>419</sup> Kisby's Overviews, p. 52 "ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)", Participaction MG 291 2004-41, University of Saskatchewan Archives.

<sup>420</sup> Keith McKerracher presents drastically different numbers in his recollections of this period. He suggested that the initial grant was for \$642,000, and because of his insider connections with the media and his shrew use of money, that \$250,000 was remaining at year's end. This amount was returned to the Treasury Board, an act unheard of in the federal government. "The Asian man who was the head bureaucrat" of the board was so impressed that he returned the funds and increased the government funding to \$750,000. There is no evidence to confirm or deny this assertion.

<sup>421</sup> Kisby's Overviews, p. 52 "ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)", MG 291 2004-41, Participaction Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>422</sup> Kisby, 52.

generously defined by Russ Kisby as between 1975 and 1995, ParticipACTION generated on average \$15 of advertising for every dollar invested by the federal government.<sup>423</sup> Although McKerracher framed the annual grant as seed money not expected to continue indefinitely, it became obvious to many ParticipACTION administrators including Board Member Don Bailey, that ParticipACTION's future was entirely dependent on these operating funds. Although exceptionally innovative in its economic structure, this annual grant became the linchpin of ParticipACTION's business model. While sponsoring corporations such as Safeway or Tilden may have offered free exposure by printing the ParticipACTION logo and slogans on their grocery bags and bumper stickers, the federal grant paid the rent for ParticipACTION's offices, the labour costs of its small staff, and the marginal cost of creating its advertising mock-ups.



424

### ParticipACTION: "Allowed to Sunset"

As Russ Kisby painfully discovered during the late 1980s and 1990s, no corporate sponsor was willing to step into the breach left by government to directly fund these basic operating costs. According to Michel O'Neill, the end of the Cold War significantly weakened

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (1), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.



health promotion as a public policy supported by the Canadian federal government.<sup>425</sup> By the mid-1990s, it became clear that the western world would not be returning to the “big welfare state era” of the 1950s and 1960s and that many existing programs would have to be phased out to meet the conservative fiscal policy of limited government.<sup>426</sup> The 1990s also witnessed the closure of many government projects developed to combat the now-ended Cold War.<sup>427</sup> In this culture of streamlining and mothballing, the Advisory Committee on Population Health (ACPH) was created in 1992. At ACPH’s inaugural meeting, federal provincial, and territorial deputy ministers of public health were invited to investigate future frameworks of integrated preventative health.<sup>428</sup> In 1994, the ACPH produced a discussion paper entitled *Strategies for Population Health: Investing in the Health of Canadians*. While health promotion focused on the individual choices of Canadians in their personal health, population health as a public health strategy identified nine underlying social determinants of health and endeavoured to address these issues on a provincial and territorial level.<sup>429</sup> *Strategies for Population Health* was heavily supported by the provincial and territorial ministers of health who, as Peter Lesaux revealed, resented any and all federal incursions in their provincial jurisdiction.<sup>430</sup> Though not officially adopted as federal policy until 1997, the publication of *Strategies for Population Health* truly marked the death knell of national health promotion programs in Canada.<sup>431</sup> Rather than cutting them outright, the Ministry of Health suggested that these programs, including ParticipACTION,

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<sup>425</sup> Michel O’Neill, Ann Pederson, Sophie Dupéré, Irving Rootman, *Health Promotion in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Canadian Scholars Press Inc., 2007) 28.

<sup>426</sup> O’Neill, 11.

<sup>427</sup> These include the DEW Line System and Diefenbunker. <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo8/no2/lajeunes-eng.asp> (Accessed March 22, 2016)

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. The nine social determinants of health identified by *Strategies for Population Health* were income and social status; social support networks; education; employment and working conditions; physical environment; biology and genetic endowments; personal health practices; and coping skills; healthy child development; and health services.

<sup>430</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Peter Lesaux, November 20, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

be “allowed to sunset”<sup>432</sup>, a platitude that Don Bailey more aptly describes as being “starved to death”.<sup>433</sup>

Health Canada’s process of clawing back ParticipACTION’s dedicated operating grant and replacing this funding model with campaign-specific contracts, much like those solicited from the private sector, effectively forced ParticipACTION into a model that ran counter to its founding mandate and economic structure. The slow ‘sunset’ of its operating grant through this process of imposed change proved ParticipACTION’s death by a thousand grant cuts. Despite assurances to the contrary by Kisby, the agency’s message was corroded in order to save the brand, pushing ParticipACTION closer to a marketer and further away from being a health promoter.

In the early 2000s, Russ Kisby recorded a series of interviews explaining ParticipACTION and the motivations behind various campaigns. He also produced a series of written overviews to accompany the archival collection after its donation in 2004. In one of these overview entries, marked “1980-1986 ParticipACTION Promotions,” Kisby attempted to retroactively craft ParticipACTION’s relationship with its promotional partners. Kisby wrote:

As a policy, ParticipACTION insisted upon complete editorial control of all the content of these resources, regardless of the sponsor. Often other professionals (such as dietitians, medical personnel, etc.) were involved to provide ParticipACTION with factual content. While prominently acknowledging the financial sponsorship of various companies/products, ParticipACTION would not directly endorse any product, nor mention its brand name in any content. The ParticipACTION Board of Directors established specific guidelines regarding this policy. This policy did not prove to be a negative in attracting corporate sponsors who welcomed the indirect association with the high profile ParticipACTION media campaign and the public popularity of the corporation. This policy of non-

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

<sup>433</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

endorsement of commercial products was also important to ParticipACTION in maintaining its public service advertising support from the mass media.<sup>434</sup>

While Kisby espoused this notion of “complete editorial control”<sup>435</sup>, records from multiple campaigns suggest otherwise. In fact, ParticipACTION’s sponsors appeared to have had a significant impact on how ParticipACTION’s programs and advertisements were sold to Canadians and, like a scale slowly tipping off balance, this corporate influence only grew as ParticipACTION’s government funding and support lessened. That Canadians paid little attention to this media crafting points both to the power ParticipACTION had as a vehicle for the advancement of likeminded corporate agendas and to the efficacy of its earliest brand awareness efforts.

#### A Board of Businessmen: Sugar and Smoking Matches

The initial Board of Directors for ParticipACTION came from the circles of high finance and media, not from professional sports or the academic world of physical fitness and nutrition experts. This configuration seems natural given that media-mogul Gaspé Beaubien built it with colleagues, and early decisions by the Board appear in line with these priorities. The decision to focus on national campaigns and corporate sponsorship, for example, was far more amenable to media executives than local community projects. Unsurprisingly, the Board was also quite willing to take on sponsors whose products and messages may have conflicted with ParticipACTION’s purported aim of health promotion. Beginning in 1972, the ParticipACTION logo and slogans appeared prominently on millions of St. Lawrence Sugar packages distributed to hundreds of restaurants in Central Canada. The blue and orange pinwheel also adorned hundreds of thousands of individual matchboxes produced by the Eddy Match Box Company.

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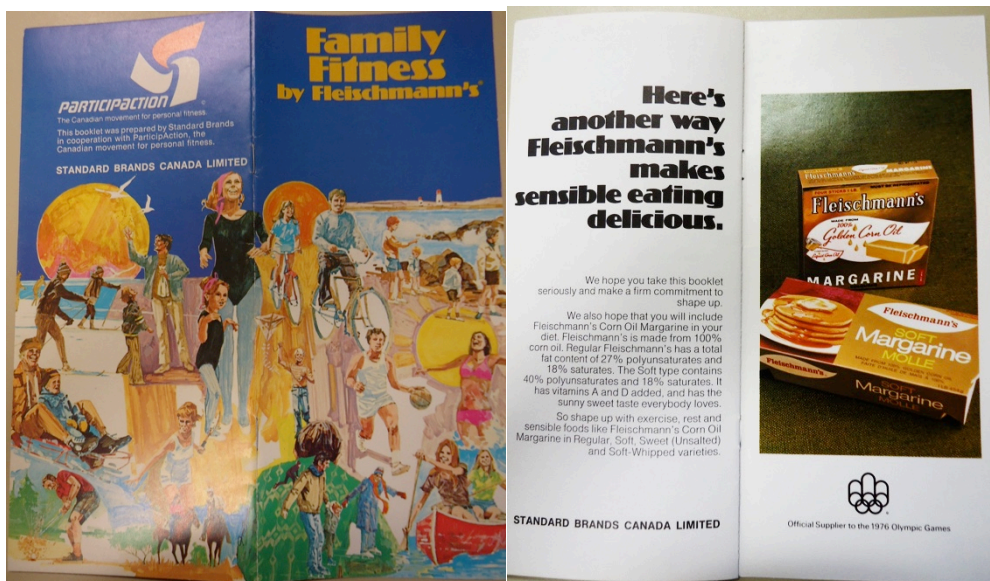
<sup>434</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “1980-86 ParticipACTION Promotions”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.



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By contrast, the third initial major sponsor of ParticipACTION was Fleischmann's margarine's parent company, Standard Brands Canada Ltd., which funded the first mass-produced pamphlets on healthy living, entitled "Family Fitness by Fleischmann's."



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All three companies had ties to sitting members of the Board of Directors, and no record exists indicating that any member voiced opposition to these corporate supporters. While margarine in the 1970s (and today) was billed as a healthier alternative to butter, thus aligning with

<sup>436</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

ParticipACTION's message, the same cannot be said for the other two sponsors. Placing the pinwheel logo on sugar packs and match boxes (presumably used to light cigarettes) appears to endorse two practices of unhealthy lifestyles that were recognized as such even in the 1970s, at least by health professionals.

The fact that the early board was comfortable accepting sponsorships from sugar and match manufacturers supports the view of ParticipACTION more focused on marketing its brand. In this sense, St. Lawrence Sugar and the Eddy Match Box Company were excellent partners because they allowed the pinwheel logo to be seen by millions of Canadians practicing everyday activities, even if these activities were adding sugar to coffee or lighting cigarettes. This saturation marketing enhanced brand awareness. The seeming ambivalence by board members between the message of ParticipACTION and the message of its sponsors should not serve to vilify the early leadership of the organization. Rather, it demonstrates how media and business experts were attempting to increase market penetration of ParticipACTION. This focus shifted dramatically, though, over the course of the next two decades.

In the early 1980s, Bailey remembers that the name of a tobacco executive was advanced to fill a vacant spot on the board. At the time, the board quickly recognized the incongruence between the individual's product and ParticipACTION's mandate.<sup>438</sup> The board voted not to advance the name and a more suitable corporate citizen selected. So what had sparked this change over the course of a decade? Simply put: Russ Kisby. After his installment in 1978, Kisby had ensured that the board also included representatives from public and academic health communities who supported a more stringent consideration of ParticipACTION's corporate affiliations and how these associations may affect the public perception of ParticipACTION.

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<sup>438</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

This being said, while the Board's selectivity better defined the organization's brand, it did not remove ParticipACTION from corporate influence.

### The Dairy Bureau of Canada and *Project APEX*

Supported by a board that shared his vision of ParticipACTION as a positive, factual, and ethically minded corporate body, Kisby cultivated partnerships with corporations that aligned with ParticipACTION corporate values. In 1985, ParticipACTION entered the first of two partnerships with dairy lobbies to create brochures, curricular aids, and information packages. The first, "31 ways in 31 days", was a booklet sponsored by the Dairy Bureau of Canada (DBC) in concert with the Canadian Dietetic Association (CDA) for National Nutrition Month in March, 1985. Produced for extensive distribution across Canada in medical offices and nutrition centres, this booklet contained helpful hints and menu suggestions to improve one's nutrition and eating habits over the course of the month.<sup>439</sup> Conveniently for the DBC, each menu strongly emphasized the need for dairy at breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner. Each meal was not only accompanied by a glass of chocolate milk, white milk, or a milk-based smoothie, but had an additional protein portion of cottage cheese, cheese, yoghurt, or sour cream. On average, these menus recommended 6-8 servings of dairy per day, over twice the suggested amount for an adult in the 1982 Canada Food Guide.<sup>440</sup> The blatant over-representation of dairy products in the menus contradicted Kisby's purported commitment to "complete editorial control"<sup>441</sup> or the assertion that sponsors had little influence over the content of ParticipACTION's programming. The influence of the dairy lobby was overt and irrefutable.

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<sup>439</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "31 ways in 31 days", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>440</sup> Canada Food Guide 1982-1992 suggested between 2-4 servings (1/2 cup to 1 cup) of various dairy products per day for children and adults. [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/context/fg\\_history-histoire\\_ga-eng.php#a1982](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/context/fg_history-histoire_ga-eng.php#a1982), Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

<sup>441</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "1980-86 ParticipACTION Promotions", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

Aside from enhanced funding, ParticipACTION found other benefits to the partnership with the DBC and CDA. In his overview for this program, Kisby emphasized that the joint participation of the CDA added credibility to the ParticipACTION brand. Again, the establishment of this mutually beneficial relationship provided evidence to support both Rose's and Rutherford's views that experts are key to neo-liberal governance. Public sector claims are often underpinned by purported experts to re-enforce and entrench the intended messaging in a suggestible and anxious population. Working together, ParticipACTION and the CDA gained credibility by supporting one another. By leaving behind its McKerracher-era humour for Kisby's focus on factually-based messaging, ParticipACTION became a more academic and seemingly credible organization, a transition facilitated by this partnership with the CDA and DBC. This joint venture with likeminded organizations exemplified ParticipACTION's sponsorships during the 1980s and early 1990s.

ParticipACTION's next foray into nutritional programming was far more pervasive than a pamphlet available in doctors' offices. In 1987, with the joint sponsoring of the Alberta Dairy Nutrition Council and Alberta Recreation and Parks, ParticipACTION designed an educational curriculum for all Alberta public school students in grades four to six. Embedded in their health classes, *Project APEX (Action Program on Eating and Exercise)*, showed students "how to reach [their] own personal peak by improving [their] activity level and eating habits."<sup>442</sup> The curriculum binder included eleven lesson plans, a Teacher's Guide to additional resources and activities, two family newsletters, and personal journals for students to record their eating and physical activities.

What made this program both unique and effective was its pervasiveness and ability to surveil a susceptible target population throughout both their working and leisure hours. As

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<sup>442</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

Franca Iacovetta has suggested, post-war concerns about juvenile delinquency provided justification for athletic groups and other organizations to serve as the “dominant model of encouraging healthy child development”. With social legitimacy gained through long-term practice, these athletic and health initiatives brought “greater attention to the issue of developing more effective programs for improving the bodies and minds of new as well as old Canadian youth.”<sup>443</sup> Athletic and health programs were a proven method of inculcating youth with prescriptive messaging regarding good citizenship and the body’s place in the demonstration of that value. *Project APEX* began with a newsletter being sent home informing parents of the implementation of the program in their child’s class and inviting them to help their child succeed in this important educational and personal health training. While the lessons were being delivered in the classroom, the students were given time to self-report on their eating and fitness habits both inside and outside of school. As this monitoring continued, parents received a second newsletter informing them of their child’s progress and suggesting tips and hints to help their child improve to meet the stated objectives. Just as in “31 ways for 31 days”, ParticipACTION blatantly over-represented dairy in the suggested dietary plans. The slogan featured in all materials was, “Just add milk and it will work!”<sup>444</sup> With the joint involvement of the provincial department of Recreation and Parks, suggestions of outdoor activities taking advantage of this department’s offerings were also overtly emphasized.

*Project APEX* was certainly not the first ‘public service’ messaging deployed in Canadian schools to re-enforce government policy. Nor was it the only program to over-emphasize the dietary value of dairy products while failing to recognize that dairy products are not part of a traditional diet for many visible minorities such as First Nations and Asian-Canadians and may

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<sup>443</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar*, (Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992) 195.

<sup>444</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “Project APEX”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.



trigger adverse physical reactions among these potential consumers. As Mary Louise Adams has discussed in her 1997 monograph, *The Trouble with Normal*, societal expectations of behaviour were effectively entrenched by targeting adolescent and pre-adolescent children with prescriptive messaging delivered through the school system. Adams discovered that during the immediate post-war period, the Toronto Board of Education focused its health efforts on the establishment of heteronormativity among its student population.<sup>445</sup> For Albertan students who progressed through the middle-years grades between 1987 and 1995, they were told by adults in positions of authority that healthy eating and physical fitness was a requirement of reaching the ‘apex’ of their personal potential and that they had a personal duty to their nation to strive toward this goal.<sup>446</sup> This strategy employed the overt targeting of a vulnerable community to meet ParticipACTION’s behaviour modification ends.

*Project APEX* proved widely successful in Alberta and, as a result, was purchased and implemented in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario for the same grades. Beginning in 1988, Ontario’s Peel Board of Education took *Project APEX* a step further by integrating its self-improvement and physical fitness message into a cross-curricular delivery model.<sup>447</sup> Students in this large school board in the Toronto area not only learned about *APEX*’s objectives in health but also in math, visual arts, culinary arts, and science.<sup>448</sup> They learned how to calculate their Body Mass Index, discussed the role of food in the metabolic process, and were encouraged to visualize, draw, or paint the image of their ideal selves. This cross-curricular approach was designed to thoroughly inculcate this messaging for this student population and was applauded by Kisby as a model for others to emulate. This form of message saturation targeting a specific

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<sup>445</sup> Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality*, (Toronto: University Toronto Press, 1997.)

<sup>446</sup> MG 291 2004-41(3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>447</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “Project APEX”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

segment of the population proved highly successful for ParticipACTION and its dairy lobby sponsors. As a result, the value of these social engineering tactics was soon recognized by corporations with much deeper pockets than the Canadian dairy lobby.

### The Big Backers: Finance and Pharma

Between 1982 and its closure, ParticipACTION's most lucrative private contracts came from three sectors, each with their own economic motivations for supporting ParticipACTION's objectives.<sup>449</sup> Insurance companies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and banks all had vested interests in ensuring that Canadians remained or became physically fit and lived long lives. For the insurance industry, companies like Occidental Insurance, Sun Life Insurance, and CrownLife Insurance contracted campaigns targeting companies and individual employees that possessed their group policy life insurance, hoping to positively affect the lifespan of their policyholders and, in turn, boost their bottom line. For financial institutions such as TD Bank and the Royal Bank of Canada, printing ParticipACTION messages on the backs of monthly mortgage statements potentially encouraged mortgage holders to remain alive, healthy, and working long enough to see out their repayment period. While these reasons seem relatively straightforward in their economic objectives, the unpacking of so-called 'Big Pharma's' motivations is slightly more convoluted. For pharmaceutical companies such as Merck Frosst and Astra Pharma (AstraZeneca post-1999), keeping Canadians physically active and alive came with a long list of caveats. Both companies heavily supported promotional campaigns and physical fitness plans that specifically targeted seniors. These campaigns advocated a particular form of healthy lifestyle that also required strict adherence to all prescribed medication. For all three sectors, ParticipACTION effectively helped these companies prolong the lives of target Canadians to

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<sup>449</sup> Kisby's Overviews, p. 52 "ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

ensure that the most lucrative consumers stayed alive and dependent on their products. I asked Merle Kisby whether her husband Russ was aware of the potential ethical conflicts that accompanied these types of private industry contracts. Mrs. Kisby confirmed that Russ was entirely aware ParticipACTION's ideals were slowly being eroded but, with dwindling government support, Russ very much felt "like his hands were tied".<sup>450</sup> If ParticipACTION was to continue, some ethical compromises had to be made. Kisby's decision to prolong ParticipACTION's life at the cost of its moral high ground reveals a shifting ethos within the agency's administration. By 1991, under looming government cutbacks to the operating grant, Russ Kisby chose to keep ParticipACTION alive with significantly compromised integrity rather than stay true to its original mandate and fold under its new financial constraints. In the end, the purported desire to help Canadians live 'better' lives quickly gave way to an overwhelming desperation for self-preservation at any cost.

### The CrownLife Challenge

The longest running and most lucrative of ParticipACTION's private contracts was an eight-year \$3.5 million agreement with CrownLife Insurance. Starting in 1984, CrownLife sponsored ParticipACTION's "City Challenge".<sup>451</sup> Based on the success of the Saskatoon vs. Umea challenge of 1975, ParticipACTION launched a similar one-day physical activity challenge between competing Canadian cities.<sup>452</sup> This annual event proved one of ParticipACTION's most popular national projects: by 1994, over 500 Canadian communities

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<sup>450</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Merle Kisby, October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>451</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "CrownLife Challenge", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>452</sup> The Citywide challenge was promoted by ParticipACTION nationally beginning in 1982 with CrownLife adding its major sponsorship in 1984. CrownLife Report, University of Saskatchewan Archives, ParticipACTION MG 291 2004-41 (3).

were participating with, on average, four million participants each year.<sup>453</sup> ParticipACTION asked Canadians to exercise for at least fifteen minutes and report their physical fitness activity to the *CrownLife Challenge* hotline or office in their local community.<sup>454</sup> The physical size of the participating communities varied widely with major cities such as Vancouver and Calgary participating alongside communities of fewer than 5,000 people.



Beginning in 1994, the challenge changed format and proceeded without CrownLife's sponsorship, becoming the launching event for *Canada Fitweek*, an entire week of fitness events created by Health Canada and promoted by ParticipACTION through a dedicated advertising contract. This arrangement lasted until 2000.<sup>456</sup>

After nearly ten years of operation, it became clear that the *CrownLife Challenge* had run its course. CrownLife and individual communities recognized that the single-day event required significant media exposure prior to and during the event in order to generate sufficient interest, a

<sup>453</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "CrownLife Challenge", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>454</sup> Interesting to note that 15 minutes of physical activity could not have a long term impact of physical activity adoption rates but it would effect entrenched perceptions of physical fitness and community belonging. The set parameters of this competition speak to ParticipACTION underlying objectives of changing social norms and perceptions surrounding physical fitness and citizenship.

<sup>455</sup> CrownLife Report, MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

lesson that should have been learned from the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon experience. Major cities such as Toronto and Montreal, which had in the past donated up to \$26 000 in support, were no longer willing to co-sponsor the challenge by providing staff time or media dollars.<sup>457</sup>

The trajectory of the *CrownLife Challenge / Canada Fitweek* follows a similar path as PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, with great initial fanfare followed by a slow death. Yet the critical similarities between the two initiatives' failures to fully inculcate ParticipACTION's message lie below the surface. In the lead-up to the Great Ga Lunka Lop, Saskatonians were saturated with targeted media invitations to participate in regularly occurring events. During this time, personal opinions that confirmed ParticipACTION's message were being created. Following the Great Ga Lunka Lop, media campaigns were less targeted and events were infrequent or not organized by the agency. In the same way, the *Crown Life Challenge* and *Canada Fitweek* received broadly targeted promotion from ParticipACTION, and the events were annual. A fifteen-minute commitment once per year is insufficient to spur a major lifestyle change.

Seemingly unable to innovate in this area of outreach, ParticipACTION once again chose to move away from affiliations with municipal governments to instead target their marketing to large corporations and provincial government branches such as ministries of education, health, and recreation. This shift reflected the limited staff needed to maintain personal relationships with individual communities, but it also resulted in ParticipACTION stepping back from that grassroots relationship Canadians needed for message penetration, favouring instead a more national and corporate approach to community engagement.

It is clear from the language used that CrownLife representatives also were beginning to question the continuing investment in this annual project. The CrownLife Challenge Report, compiled after the event in May of 1992, offers detailed statistics concerning the increased brand

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

recognition rates for CrownLife as the major sponsor. These statistics were drawn from the findings of the contracted media-monitoring firm Bowden's News Service.<sup>458</sup> That ParticipACTION emphasized the media exposure benefits for CrownLife and that the money was spent to contract an independent firm to calculate exposure value speaks to the shift in priorities for ParticipACTION's administration, from health promotion to simply remaining open. Interestingly, despite the obvious benefits to CrownLife for ensuring a healthy clientele who would be at reduced risk of making an insurance claim, ParticipACTION's case for sponsorship did not mention any health benefits to the *CrownLife Challenge*. ParticipACTION touted statistics far more tangible, easy to prove, and likely more appealing to CrownLife executives: advertising return on investment of the sponsorship. Making a case for maintaining the partnership focused on media exposure is also telling as it belies a level of concern within ParticipACTION that their most lucrative partner was beginning to question its annual investment. It is also clear that ParticipACTION's leadership felt that the CrownLife sponsorship was critical. Their concerns were well founded as CrownLife's sponsorship of the one-day event was not renewed the following year.<sup>459</sup> Instead, CrownLife refocused its resources with a five-year contract sponsoring an employee health program for its policy holders entitled *CrownLife Workplace Wellness*.<sup>460</sup>

#### Occidental and Sun Life

While CrownLife was ParticipACTION's most dedicated corporate sponsor, it was not the only insurance company to recognize a common cause with ParticipACTION. Occidental Life Insurance Company of Canada sponsored a series of booklets and a 30-minute film tackling

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "Workplace Wellness", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

the ten most common excuses (time, self-consciousness, old habits, etc.) as to why Canadians were not engaging in physical fitness. *Fitness: Head On* was a package made available in Occidental Life branch offices but was not widely distributed by other means.<sup>461</sup> While its impact proved minimal, Kisby suggests that the booklets were “popular” and “equally relevant today”.<sup>462</sup> By enumerating the top ten excuses as to why Canadians were not engaging in physical fitness, these booklets and video did not entertain the view that Canadians may have made conscious lifestyle choices that did not conform to ParticipACTION’s prescriptive messaging. By systematically undermining these “so called reasons”<sup>463</sup>, ParticipACTION’s writers did not give these statements value. Rather, they viewed them as illogical barriers between individuals and the healthy and fit lifestyle they should want and desire to achieve. Failure to adhere to this set of values was framed in this material as failure to conform to societal expectations of belonging. Paul Campos, historian of race and sport, suggests that failure to conform to embodied notions of fitness are often fueled by anxiety concerning racial integration.<sup>464</sup> I would suggest that this anxiety was particularly acute in large urban centres where the failure of racial minority groups to participate in the *CrownLife Challenge* spurred the creation of physical fitness days particularly targeting ethnic communities such as those created for Vancouver’s Chinese-Canadians.<sup>465</sup>

### *Kinsmen ParticiPark*

The *Kinsmen ParticiPark* initiative was a Sun Life Insurance Company’s tri-party initiative with ParticipACTION and the Kinsman Clubs of Canada. ParticipACTION was

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<sup>461</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “1980-86 ParticipACTION Promotions”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger, Eric Oliver, and Glenn Gaesser, “The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: public health crisis or moral panic?”, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 35 (2006) 55-60.

<sup>465</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

granted a contract worth \$350 000 to act as a liaison between the insurance company and the local service groups in an effort to build Kinsmen ParticiParks in communities across Canada.<sup>466</sup> The local Kinsmen association provided the timber and labour; Sun Life provided all the signage and promotional materials; and ParticipACTION designed the parks to ensure they provided a comprehensive circuit-training regime. Between 1977 and 1981, dozens of ParticiParks were built across Canada with extensive files archived for communities such as Tillsonburg, ON, and Rocky Mountain House, AB.<sup>467</sup> Looking at ParticipACTION's vast array of programming, the *Kinsmen ParticiPark* initiative stands out as wholly unlike anything else the organization attempted. It was a tri-party arrangement, rather than a corporate sponsorship. ParticipACTION played no part in marketing, instead designing physical spaces. The end product was not a piece of advertising, booklet, or physical fitness event but a fixed construction meant to last for decades through the maintenance provided by local Kinsmen Club members. As a service group, the Kinsmen represented the economic middle-class and traditional dominant social category of cultural gatekeepers. For this group, the ParticiPark model achieved multiple ends: it removed the excuses of poverty and inaccessibility as perceived justification for embodied deviancy among a community; it granted the Kinsmen members authority as benevolent gatekeepers of community fitness; and it normalized their predominantly Anglo-Celtic moral code of belonging and citizenship.<sup>468</sup> ParticipACTION's value in this arrangement was as a credible expert in physical fitness training and, more importantly, as a recognized and respected national brand. As early as 1977, it seems, ParticipACTION was becoming sufficiently successful in its mission of

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<sup>466</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "ParticiParks", ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>467</sup> CrownLife Report, MG 291 2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>468</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 65.



brand awareness to diversify from its core business of advertising into the creating of public spaces.



Such a change in role was anomalous for this time period. In the 1970s, McKerracher's ParticipACTION focused on direct marketing to Canadians through donated space in newspapers, magazines, billboards, buses, and radio commercials. ParticipACTION and its physical fitness message were at the centre of these elegantly simple advertisements, and little additional information existed to complicate the transmission of these directed messages, as per McKerracher's design.

The *Kinsmen ParticiPark* initiative, on the other hand, fell directly under the supervision of Russ Kisby as Vice-President and National Coordinator.<sup>470</sup> When considering Kisby's desire to professionalize and add academic credibility to ParticipACTION's messaging, the *Kinsmen ParticiPark* may in fact be less of an anomaly and more of a portent. As early as 1977, Kisby was actively attempting to steer ParticipACTION away from Keith McKerracher's area of

<sup>469</sup> ParticiPARK, MG 291 2004-41 (3), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>470</sup> Baka, 33.

strength in advertising to his own as an expert in community engagement and physical fitness. This shift in emphasis was gradual but illustrates the evolution of ParticipACTION's programming in the 1980s and 1990s. Tellingly, Kisby in 1977 also began to allow sponsor objectives, in this case the desire of Kinsmen to become gatekeepers, to slowly creep into ParticipACTION's initiatives. *Kinsmen ParticiPark* may have proven a more meaningful exploration of ParticipACTION's shifting underlying values and *raison d'être* as the concurrent processes of academic legitimization and corporate intrusion complicated the once exceptionally simple transmission of meaning between ParticipACTION and the Canadian consumer. Under Kisby's leadership, ParticipACTION's position as an independent advertising powerhouse was eroded. ParticipACTION instead attempted to become a credible voice for physical fitness in Canada in an arena that proved to be exceptionally crowded, cut-throat, and philosophically shifting under ParticipACTION's feet.

#### Canadian Seniors and 'Big Pharma'

According to Kisby's Overviews, New Brunswick's Minister of Health Dr. Russell King approached ParticipACTION in the early 1990s to implement a program. Dr. King wanted to target the province's growing population over the age of sixty-five and address their unique health needs.<sup>471</sup> *Vie Sante et Actif / Healthy Active Living*, as the project was entitled, offered an innovative mode of delivery. Rather than blanket advertising that attempted to appeal to seniors, ParticipACTION produced comprehensive packages that were to be used by small groups of seniors in their home communities. According to Roger Duval, a New Brunswick bureaucrat, the provincial government was approached by leaders in the seniors' community who were looking

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<sup>471</sup> The Overviews do not provide more detailed dates.

for a health information program to be “delivered to seniors by seniors”.<sup>472</sup> The Ministry of Health then approached ParticipACTION for aid in developing the educational material and in finding a sponsor to supplement the allocated provincial funds. Presented in the community halls and church-basements of New Brunswick’s small towns, Duval suggested that the grassroots initiative aligned with the small town nature of the Maritime province and proved a highly successful program for New Brunswick seniors.<sup>473</sup>

Kisby’s Overview of the program does not specify how the Health Alliance Division of Astra Pharma became the sponsoring body for the program; luckily, Roger Duval was able to remember the details omitted from Kisby’s narrative. Duval’s account nuances Kisby’s Overview and clarifies the often-passive voice the national president chose to employ when addressing potentially controversial topics. While Duval considers Kisby a beloved mentor, he also suggests that Kisby was a man “who did not suffer fools”, and was counseled by one of Kisby’s staffers prior to their initial meeting as to how to effectively approach the ParticipACTION president.<sup>474</sup> According to Duval, it was Kisby who suggested a partnership with Astra Pharma and hinted that once the program was built, it could become a potential source of revenue on offer for other provinces to purchase. Five pillars were designated as areas of particular emphasis in the program: “making healthy choices, wise use of medication, healthy eating, physical activity, and stress management”.<sup>475</sup> It is clear from the five objectives crafted by ParticipACTION writer Peggy Edwards that Astra Pharma’s interests were considered in programming decisions. The “wise use of medication” stands before nutrition and physical

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<sup>472</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Roger Duval , September 25, 2012 2:30 EST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “Healthy Active Living For Older Adults”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

activity as important educational units for seniors to consider.<sup>476</sup> Kisby's suggestion of approaching Astra Pharma and the overt emphasis placed on medication compliance in the programming itself definitively complicates Kisby's assertion of "complete editorial control" with no programming influence exerted by corporate sponsors.<sup>477</sup> As was the case of the Alberta Dairy Nutrition Council targeting children, Astra Pharma was using ParticipACTION's credibility and national brand awareness to deliver its message subversively to the sponsor's target market while also improving Astra Pharma's corporate image. Similar educational programs were created for Merck Frosst Pharmaceutical (*Live It Up!*) and for Hoffmann-LaRoche Pharmaceutical (*Food for Thought*).<sup>478</sup> As Kisby suggested, the New Brunswick program was implemented nationally beginning in 1996 under the heading *Active Age* and earned ParticipACTION a \$750,000 distribution contract from Astra Pharma.<sup>479</sup> It is unclear whether the New Brunswick Ministry of Health ever received compensation for their part in creating this programming as the material produced by Edwards belonged to ParticipACTION and the change in name effectively severed any ties to the originating project in New Brunswick.

In the Phase 1 Oral Histories for this study, all participants, whether supportive or unsupportive of Kisby's tactics, each independently acknowledged that Russ Kisby loved and believed in ParticipACTION's healthy living message and did anything in his power to keep the organization alive. The year 1988 marked the zenith of ParticipACTION's dedicated federal operating grant (\$1 146 000) with a slow but steady decline to follow during the early 1990s.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "1980-86 ParticipACTION Promotions", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>478</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "Live It Up!" and "Print PSA Themes", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>479</sup> Kisby's Overviews, "Active Age", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>480</sup> Kisby's Overviews, p.52 "ParticipACTION Funding and Media Exposure (\$,000)", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

ParticipACTION's decline in the 1990s was not inevitable as demonstrated by one highly successful program that had the potential of reinventing the agency.

*Body Break: The Omitted Success Story*

Perhaps ParticipACTION's most memorable stand-alone campaign was a series of ninety-second fitness messages produced between 1989 and 1991. *Body Break* with Hal Johnson and JoAnne McLeod remains one of the most prevalent memories of ParticipACTION among Phase 2 participants. Canadians under forty-years-of-age hold this advertising series as their most dominant memory of ParticipACTION programming<sup>481</sup> and for some, the terms *Body Break* and ParticipACTION have become synonymous. A 1994 Awareness and Impact Survey conducted by Tandemar Research reported that 9% of Canadians thought of *Body Break* unaided when asked about ParticipACTION.<sup>482</sup> Though low, this statistic was still significantly higher than any other word association. In Tandemar's final report, the researchers suggested that this link most likely lessened with time. If the memories of the Phase 2 participants and anecdotal observations are any indication, this prediction proved false as the mnemonic link between these two brands has only strengthened since their separation in 1992.

Reading the silences in the 1992 and 1994 Awareness and Impact surveys, it is clear that ParticipACTION asked the survey administer to delve into this link with the hopes that the connection between the two organizations was not permanently etched in the collective memory of Canadians. In researching ParticipACTION's place in the dominant social memory, *Body Break* has inevitably become the 'elephant in the room'. While Russ Kisby produced a detailed overview for every pamphlet, every shoelace distribution campaign, and every lecture series,

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<sup>481</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>482</sup> Impact and Awareness, Tandemar Research, May 1994, MG 291 2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

*Body Break* does not appear anywhere in his recollections of ParticipACTION. There is no archival box with promotional materials, correspondence, or contract drafts for this, the most famous of ParticipACTION's campaigns. The reason for *Body Break*'s omission from the historical record is intrinsically linked to ParticipACTION's weakening as a health authority during the 1990s as well as Kisby's brand protectionism.

According to Hal Johnson, in 1988, he and his partner JoAnne McLeod took their \$2000 in savings and created a demonstration video, which they pitched to over forty American and Canadian media agencies.<sup>483</sup> Both physically fit individuals and skilled athletes, they suggested creating short fitness videos to run as television commercials. The goal was to target those who were watching television and therefore in obvious need of education in physical fitness. In hindsight, Johnson recognized that he and McLeod were a significant risk for potential backers. Networks did not know how to market the idea, and Johnson and McLeod were problematic as spokespersons because of Johnson's African-Canadian ancestry. After unsuccessfully pitching *Body Break* to TSN (The Sport Network, a CTV specialty channel owned by Bell Media), a representative of the network privately made this reason clear to Johnson.<sup>484</sup> It had not occurred to the couple that Johnson's race might be one of the reasons for their lack of success, but undeterred, Johnson decided to change tack. If Johnson's mixed-race heritage was a major force hampering their progress with corporate media agencies, he decided to approach government agencies that, under growing employment equity legislation including the pending *1991 Broadcasting Act*, would be more amenable to employing the couple.<sup>485</sup> ParticipACTION staff

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<sup>483</sup> BodyBreak website, <http://www.bodybreak.com/about.html>, Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

<sup>484</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>485</sup> The *1991 Broadcasting Act* legislated media under CRTC jurisdiction to reflect the cultural diversity of Canada. *1991 Broadcasting Act*, S.C. 1991, c. 11. (Section 3) Government of Canada, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/B-9.01/page-2.html#h-4>

member Bob Duck warmly received Johnson and McLeod's pitch. Duck soon became the ParticipACTION liaison for the ParticipACTION-*Body Break* affiliation. The initial contract was for five shows at \$5600 per show.<sup>486</sup> Unaware of the success the *Body Break* spots might generate, Kisby made no attempt to claim intellectual property rights to the *Body Break* name which remained under the sole ownership of Johnson and McLeod. As Johnson explains, "We always respected Russ, but I didn't realize how politically savvy he was until our relationship ended." While Johnson and McLeod retained ownership, Kisby requested that the shows be ninety seconds in length and that the tone be lightened to fit with ParticipACTION's image and approach.<sup>487</sup> According to Don Bailey, the decision to produce 90-second commercials rather than the traditional length of 30-60 seconds proved the campaign's most attractive aspect for television programmers.<sup>488</sup> The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunication Commission (CRTC) required a minimum number of shows to be Canadian content, not counting sponsored advertisements of no more than 60 seconds in duration. At 90 seconds, *Body Break* was considered by the CRTC to be a Canadian television show, allowing programmers to meet the CRTC Canadian content requirements. This loophole resulted in *Body Break* being heavily broadcast on all Canadian television stations without ParticipACTION having to purchase any airtime.

The number of Canadians who could identify ParticipACTION from its pinwheel logo grew from 83.8% in 1989 to 89.7% only three years later in no small part due to the two-year relationship between *Body Break* and ParticipACTION. The overwhelming success of the *Body*

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<sup>486</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>487</sup> Kisby Interview, The ParticipACTION Archive Project. "Body Break", December, 2003. <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/motivate/bodybreak.html> Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

<sup>488</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Dr. Don Bailey, September 17, 2012 11:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

*Break* campaign, though, proved to be its eventual undoing. According to both Hal Johnson and Don Bailey, Kisby was exceptionally concerned about the campaign's extreme popularity and worried that *Body Break* would soon overshadow ParticipACTION as the physical fitness authority in the minds of Canadians. As Johnson succinctly states: "The father thought the son would get too big."<sup>489</sup> As corroborated by Kisby, Johnson, and Bailey, this desire to protect ParticipACTION and its brand dominance were at the heart of Kisby's decision not to renew the *Body Break* contract after 1992. While this protectionism was the underlying motivation amongst the various accounts, the publically reported cause varies significantly. According to a 2003 interview with Russ Kisby,

[Hal Johnson and JoAnne McLeod] wanted to become more commercialized. ParticipACTION, that was not the way we wanted to go, so we had a positive and mutual parting of the ways. It was a little bit like the 60-year old Swede: once it got into the public psyche it had a long, long life, whether or not we continued to promote it or not.<sup>490</sup>

While this interview suggests that Johnson and McLeod wanted to pursue commercial endorsements of products, Johnson strongly disagrees with this depiction, and his account is supported in principle by Don Bailey as well as the historical timeline of *Body Break* product endorsements. After the relationship ended with ParticipACTION, Johnson and McLeod spent four years actively searching for other means to market the *Body Break* show. It wasn't until 1996 that *Body Break* was able to earn a new contract by eventually endorsing a product: the *Body Break* AbMaster. According to Johnson's recollection, it was like "Dad just kicked us out the house. Where are we going to go? What are we going to do? We felt so identified with

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<sup>489</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>490</sup> Kisby Interview, The ParticipACTION Archive Project. "Body Break", December, 2003. <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/participaction/english/motivate/bodybreak.html> Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.



ParticipACTION.”<sup>491</sup> Since *Body Break* and ParticipACTION were becoming synonymous, brand protectionism was at the heart of the split between the two organizations, particularly in light of changing attitudes by corporate sponsors. Kellogg’s cereal and others were actively requesting Johnson and McLeod be a part of potential ParticipACTION sponsorship contracts.<sup>492</sup> Since *Body Break* was a separate company, doing so required a revenue sharing arrangement, a situation anathema to Kisby during a time of financial strain. This was not the direction Kisby wanted to take ParticipACTION, so he severed ties.

### The Honeydew Drama

Yet another dimension of the divergent visions of ParticipACTION and *Body Break* was presented by Duval and Bailey, and touched upon by Johnson, in their recollections of this period. As a Maritimer, Duval expressed his concern to Kisby regarding the Central Canadian and elitist nature of the lifestyle depicted in the *Body Break* advertisements. Duval felt that the facilities shown, the clothing worn by Johnson and McLeod, and the fresh food incorporated into their recipes were beyond the reach of most Maritimers and effectively isolated his region from embracing ParticipACTION’s underlying message in a manner similar to the issues concerning the American President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sport. This effort to ensure that *Body Break*’s messaging remained economically accessible was repeated by Don Bailey in an interview while remembering several script vetting meetings to achieve this end. Johnson recalls with frustration the charge that they “were too good-looking, too model-ish, too high-end sport-ish” and were asked to make changes to their attire and menu selections on several occasions.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>492</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>493</sup> Interestingly, this parallels the notion that the PCPFS was undermined by its focus on promotion by elite athletes, making physical fitness seem unattainable.

“Show #18 Basketball – Honeydew Delight” proved a fascinating point of intersection for the views of Johnson, Bailey, and Duval. Unsolicited, each interviewee pointed to this show in particular as evidence of the continual tension between ParticipACTION’s and *Body Break*’s competing visions. Johnson remembers the fight to retain fresh honeydew as the central ingredient in the recipe; Bailey remembers suggesting the substitution of canned pineapple as a more economic garnish to this honeydew bowl fruit salad; and Duval points to this particular show as evidence that *Body Break* was not speaking to the “majority of Canadians” who could not find or afford fresh honeydew melons. This single show from over fifteen years ago remains a salient memory for all three men and points to the underlying divisions between *Body Break* and the public persona espoused by ParticipACTION. It is also a reminder that local community initiatives were more effective at inculcating ParticipACTION’s message. National campaigns, though powerful at selling the agency’s brand, allowed for subversive private memories to be developed. Potentially divisive issues of regionalism and socio-economic disparities are powerful forces in one’s personal identification with ParticipACTION’s national campaigns. That something so innocuous as a melon eaten by a fit Torontonion could sour the appeal of ParticipACTION’s message in the whole of the Maritimes speaks to the power of local identity and the near impossibility of national campaigns to effect lifestyle change.

### The Fight for Active Living

Another conflict between Johnson and Kisby indicates the increasing financial challenge faced by ParticipACTION. Active Living Canada was a government body created in June of 1993 to consolidate a number of secretariats, alliances, and centers supported by the government to encourage physical fitness. The agency was the end result of a Ministerial Steering Committee led by Minister Pierre Cadieux reviewing active living programming. It led to several

organizations folding and thirty jobs being cut in this sector of the government.<sup>494</sup>

ParticipACTION's arms-length status sheltered the organization from this initial blow, but Kisby was acutely aware of his organization's tenuous status. According to Johnson, Active Living Canada approached Johnson and McLeod through their marketing firm in 1993. Russ Kisby "blew a gasket" when he discovered the federal body had put the recently ousted Johnson and McLeod on a \$15 000 retainer to continue the *Body Break* shows. According to Johnson:

[Kisby] went into Active Living Canada and squashed the deal politically. Somebody pulled some strings. We knew through [Johnson and McLeod's contracted marketing firm] Galore that Russ Kisby was involved. Russ was courting Active Living Canada to fund him. He wanted their money.<sup>495</sup>

Given the political climate of the day in health promotion and the drastic cuts taking place among active living agencies associated with the federal government, this depiction of Kisby, his political sway, and his championing of ParticipACTION are entirely plausible. Scattered throughout the ParticipACTION files are handwritten notes from Kisby to government bureaucrats and ministers that demonstrate the personal relationships and political networks he nurtured. Tucked at the end of one memo discussing a government contract, Kisby wrote a short personal note to Diane Marleau, Minister of Amateur Sport, stating how much fun he had with her at a recent Toronto Blue Jays baseball game and expressing a desire to "do it again sometime".<sup>496</sup> These influential relationships granted Kisby the power to influence the award of Active Living contract for *Body Break* in 1993. From a personal perspective, Kisby had dedicated his career to legitimizing health promotion, establishing ParticipACTION as the preeminent national authority on physical fitness, and raising the status of health advocacy as a

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<sup>494</sup> Kim L. Bercovitz, "Canada's Active Living policy: a critical analysis", *Health Promotion International*, 13:4 (1998) 321.

<sup>495</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Hal Johnson, August 3, 2012 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>496</sup> Box 7, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

credible “helping profession”.<sup>497</sup> In the midst of this work, Kisby had established his own position as a politically powerful gatekeeper of national health, and this was a status he strove to maintain.

### ParticipACTION Solo Projects Flop

Despite accepting dozens of corporate contracts, ParticipACTION was still unable to generate sufficient revenue from sponsors to cover most of its basic operating costs funded by a declining annual federal grant. As a result, Kisby and others in the organization sought alternative means of generating revenue. The first attempt was to sell sweatshirts, t-shirts, and other athletic wear bearing the ParticipACTION logo. The decision to embark on this project was based on the overwhelmingly positive response event coordinators reported to handing out similar items as prizes at ParticipACTION community activities. Unfortunately, while Canadians such as the Achievement Week Award winners in Saskatoon enjoyed receiving ParticipACTION shoelaces and hats for free, they were unwilling to pay for such products. Although *Action Wear*, as it was known, remained an active ParticipACTION program for nearly a decade, it was never a profitable venture.<sup>498</sup>

Beginning in 1984, Kisby’s team attempted another stand-alone project entitled the ParticipACTION NETWORK. This membership-based organization looked to attract leaders in community-based fitness programs; produce a quarterly newsletter discussing innovations in the field; share ParticipACTION’s current initiatives; and act as a meeting place for community collaboration among this burgeoning group of health professionals. The initial funding for this venture was a shared investment from Health Canada and ParticipACTION, with ongoing

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<sup>497</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 64.

<sup>498</sup> Kisby Overviews, Action Wear operated from 1972 to 1979, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

operational costs to be covered by membership fees. It was also blatant attempt to copy the recently successful COACH Network established by the Canadian Health Information Association in 1980. COACH was quickly adapted and applauded among health circles and continues to be a highly successful networking and communicating tool for health information professionals.<sup>499</sup> From the Kisby Overviews, it is clear that the President passionately supported the creation of the ParticipACTION NETWORK. Kisby explained that within two years, the network had accrued over 35 000 members and was well received within its target market. Unfortunately, the program was financially unsustainable and Kisby cancelled it. In defense, Kisby suggested that the ParticipACTION NETWORK did not succeed because it was simply before its time and could have proven a highly successful financial venture in the “internet age”.<sup>500</sup> The failures of both Action Wear and the ParticipACTION NETWORK stand as clear signs of ParticipACTION’s inability to produce viable stand-alone campaigns during the 1990s.<sup>501</sup> While ParticipACTION was widely successful at aiding corporations in marketing their products or in producing information and education packages for implementation by government, ParticipACTION as a commodity could no longer ‘sell’ itself to Canadians.

It is uncertain whether Kisby and his team recognized the apparent passivity of public engagement to their national campaigns, but what is clear is that from 1986 onward, ParticipACTION redoubled its efforts on the marketing of programs for others – lobby groups, government agencies, and corporations – and no longer attempted to become a self-sufficient body removed from its federal operating grant. The government’s initial seed money did not result in a viable harvest to sustain the following spring’s planting, and the Saskatchewan-born

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<sup>499</sup> COACH website, <http://www.coachorg.com/en/index.asp> (Accessed March 27, 2016)

<sup>500</sup> Kisby’s Overviews, “ParticipACTION NETWORK”, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>501</sup> Active Wear was a project created by Kisby as Vice President and supported in to the 1990s. It was never financially viable.

Kisby recognized this grim reality. In the 1990s, when ParticipACTION's grant began to erode, Kisby actively framed this funding as vital and expected in order to keep ParticipACTION alive. Although this financial reality had always been the case, Kisby's change in rhetoric marked the desperation of a man who had tried to do without and had unfortunately discovered that this was impossible.

### Conclusion

It is clear from the many corporate sponsorships that ParticipACTION's move away from supporting community initiatives pushed it ever closer to a role similar to that of a marketing company and further from its intended goal of a health promotion agency that changed Canadians' lifestyles. Ambivalence towards sponsorship of unhealthy products in return for brand exposure was the first step. Allowing sponsors to skew messaging to meet their own ends, despite Kisby's assertions to the contrary, also indicates a corporate culture more interested in the fiscal bottom line than Canadians' waist lines. More telling, though, was the continued focus on enhancing and preserving the ParticipACTION brand. Whether finding mass-market vehicles for the pinwheel logo (sugar packets and matchboxes) or canceling iconic partnerships (*Body Break*), there was a greater emphasis on the brand than the actual stated mission. This may be the reason why ParticipACTION commodities, such as t-shirts, did not sell. ParticipACTION's national campaigns successfully branded, but its lack of ability to actually change Canadians' habits meant that it did not bring them to action.

Kisby's 2003 interview perhaps offers the most poignant example of ParticipACTION's problems. It was no secret that Kisby disliked both the 60-year-old Swede commercial and *Body Break* – the former for its lack of scientific rigour and the latter for its supposed commercialism or lack of connection to 'ordinary' Canadians – despite their wild popularity and staying power

within the Canadian psyche. In both cases, these campaigns were created by others that did not mirror Kisby's vision of ParticipACTION, and in both cases, their tremendous and continuing popularity with Canadians was a disappointment to the long-time president. Kisby was not a marketer; he came from the field of physical education and health. He objected to both campaigns on professional grounds, something expected of an academically rigorous health promotion organization.

But in so doing, Kisby was putting ParticipACTION into an increasingly untenable position. In 1991, John Jackson published a scathing and well-supported article in *Recreation Canada* condemning ParticipACTION as a government boondoggle that wasted millions of dollars to produce no tangible change in the physical fitness of the nation.<sup>502</sup> To fulfill ParticipACTION's original mandate as a healthism project, Kisby had to reinvest in supporting local initiatives. Yet ParticipACTION was struggling to maintain its already small operating grant in an era when health promotion, its underlying philosophy, was itself under attack. By maintaining a focus on national campaigns that promoted the ParticipACTION brand of his design, Kisby had to turn away from the most popular campaigns in the agency's history. Yet this action further eroded the agency's position as the premier health promotion vehicle in Canada. The third option, to cash in on ParticipACTION's brand and move towards a contracted marketing agency, could keep them afloat, but it would undercut the entire purpose of ParticipACTION. It was also unfamiliar territory for Kisby. That both the 60-year-old Swede and *Body Break* were created by others illustrates Kisby's inability to design media campaigns that resonated with Canadians. In-house campaigns such as *Vitality* or *Don't Just Think About It – Do It*, were too bland and unremarkable to impact Canadian's social memories.

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<sup>502</sup> John J. Jackson, "Mass Participation in Physical Recreation: A fifteen-year study in Saskatoon", *Recreation Canada*, 49:3 (1991) 33-38.

During Kisby's tenure as President, ParticipACTION's established breadth was sustained through regionally focused initiatives such as *Project APEX* and *Vie Sante et Actif / Healthy Active Living* and demographically targeted programs such as CrownLife's *Workplace Wellness*. Yet, tremendous breadth of awareness had limited depth to create behavioural change. Simply put, ParticipACTION was failing in its mandate, but increasing the impact of these programs was beyond Kisby's abilities. He was out of his depth.

ParticipACTION's growingly obvious dependence on private industry to fund new programming and its reliance on media support to broadcast these messages influenced the advocacy work ParticipACTION was comfortably able to undertake. As Francois Lagarde explains,

Given its dependency on public service announcement support from the media, ParticipACTION was not very open to the idea of engaging in advocacy activities that could have generated controversy. This eventually reduced its ability to be seen as a leading organization that addressed the factors that prevented some segments of the population from adopting physical activity.<sup>503</sup>

Having effectively eschewed any engagement with the underlying social determinants of health, ParticipACTION was no longer creating innovative marketing campaigns and it was no longer at the forefront of health advocacy.

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<sup>503</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION's Success", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21.



ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Chapter 7 – ParticipACTION: A Federal Trojan Horse in Quebec...  
and a Pyrrhic Victory (1988-1999)

“There is no country, like my country, Canada”. Leo’s most memorable CANADA 125 Experience: “A Greek festival held in the city of Dorval had politicians from all levels of government attending, celebrating Canada’s 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday. It was a pleasure to hear Quebec Energy Minister, Lise Bacon, say ‘vivre le Canada’.”<sup>504</sup>

Of all the provinces, Quebec offered ParticipACTION its most robust and continuous relationship. Despite ParticipACTION’s perceived inability to activate large-scale change in the behaviour of Canadians, it remains a success in its ability to implant its brand within the national collective memory and promote a particular perception of health, the body, and citizenship. These are no small accomplishments in a country as diverse and pluralistic as the modern Canadian nation state. In this context, ParticipACTION accomplished what few before or since have been able to: pierce the cultural consciousness of both French and English Canada. During its first twenty years in operation, the leaders of ParticipACTION made a concerted effort to not only generate original French-language content but to ensure that the popular culture of Quebec and French Canada more broadly were duly represented in its advertising materials. This chapter explores ParticipACTION’s commitment to French language programming and its evolution over three decades of political and economic upheaval. It also examines how ParticipACTION’s involvement in and occasional co-opting into Quebec-focused initiatives stands as the most powerful evidence of ParticipACTION’s position as a healthism project, promoting a brand of Canadian nationalism that was directly prescribed on the bodies of individual Canadians.

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<sup>504</sup> Leo Housakos, Ethnic Community sub-supervisors for ParticipACTION, *CANADA 125/ ParticipACTION Project*, MG 291-2004-41 (5), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

Founded in Quebec by staunch French-Canadian federalists, even ParticipACTION's name is a reflection of linguistic inclusion echoing the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.<sup>505</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, ParticipACTION continued its commitment and understanding of the unique French language culture by producing original content void of direct translation. Only after 1991, with funding dwindling and key staff departures, did ParticipACTION steer away from its original French-language programming. This downsizing also coincided with ParticipACTION taking on three extremely lucrative contracts with the federal government to act as a "community activation unit" both within and outside of Quebec. While CANADA 125,<sup>506</sup> the Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000,<sup>507</sup> and the Petro Canada Olympic Torch Relay<sup>508</sup> provided ParticipACTION with \$13 000 000 worth of funding, it was clear to employees, board members, and Russ Kisby himself that these contracts were intended to leverage ParticipACTION's brand credibility in order to sell large-scale federal government programs to a potentially apprehensive audience. In this context, ParticipACTION acted as a Trojan horse of federalist messaging to the people of Quebec during the politically charged years leading up to the 1995 Quebec Referendum on Sovereignty. This political commodification of the ParticipACTION brand was overt and continued to force ParticipACTION into an increasingly untenable arrangement with the federal government. Moreover, the co-opting of ParticipACTION was made possible by its initial design and intent, to be a trusted name removed from government oversight to achieve political ends. The proposed use of its generated trust with Canadians had simply changed from international competition to

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<sup>505</sup> <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/royal-commission-on-bilingualism-and-biculturalism/> Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

<sup>506</sup> MG 291-2004-41 (5), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>507</sup> MG 291-2004-41 (11), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

the blatant promotion of Canadian nationalism as a countermeasure to the growing separatist movement in Quebec. ParticipACTION had found yet another enemy to fight.

### Made in Quebec?

Just as the Phase 2 interviewees in Saskatoon vehemently defended their belief that ParticipACTION originated in that city, many in Quebec held a similar sense of ownership.<sup>509</sup> Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien was the first president of the organization, establishing the original head office in Place Ville Marie, Montreal.<sup>510</sup> The board continuously included important Quebecers such as Derek Price, publisher of the *Montreal Star*, and Donald Campbell, Chairman and CEO of Maclean-Hunter Limited and publisher of both *Châtelaine* and *L'actualité* current affair magazines.

Tellingly, in his personal recollections, Keith McKerracher states that he was initially turned down for the position at Sports Participation Canada because he was not bilingual,<sup>511</sup> which speaks to his appreciation, even in the very early days of the organization, of its important relationship with Quebec and French-speaking Canada as a whole. When McKerracher was eventually brought on board, it was under the understanding that his second in command would be a first-language French speaker, presumably from Quebec.

### Language Matters

The man selected for this position, Jacques Gravel, proved a fortuitous choice. Well-connected in the Montreal media and production industry, Gravel arranged for the low-cost filming of ParticipACTION ads. More notably, he created ParticipACTION's name. According

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<sup>509</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interviews with Phase II participants, September 10 – October 2, 2012 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>510</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

to his successor, Francois Lagarde, the late Mr. Gravel conceived of the name while sitting at his kitchen table “experimenting with the words ‘action’, and ‘participation’”, as two words that were already bilingual and expressed part of the mandate for the organization.<sup>512</sup> It was at the same Board meeting (December 20, 1971) that Jacques Gravel and Keith McKerracher presented the iconic pinwheel logo and name for approval,<sup>513</sup> cementing the most recognizable elements of ParticipACTION’s brand. Gravel’s dedication to original French-language content is clear from the materials available in the Campaign Collection. All cartoon and live-action images are accompanied by original captions that do not reflect direction translation. One such advertisement can be pulled from the “Print Variety of Ads 1970s”. While the English caption reads, “If you’re going to start getting into shape maybe the first thing you should do is lift yourself up from that chair.” By contrast, the French caption reads, «La meilleure façon de prendre soin de votre corps? Utilisez votre tête!»<sup>514</sup> The captions convey very different messages but both express the humorous cajoling to encourage physical activity that was emblematic of ParticipACTION’s 1970s programming. That both campaigns achieved this tone through very different messages is a credit to the self-awareness Gravel, McKerracher, and others had of ParticipACTION’s brand, its objectives, and the use of both official languages in achieving these collective ends.

Even visual messaging was carefully considered in the production of bilingual programming. In the 1983-1984 *Don’t Just Think About It – Do It!* campaign, the cartoon characters and activities differed tremendously between the English and French versions. While

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<sup>512</sup> Francois Lagarde, “The Challenge of Bilingualism: ParticipACTION Campaigns Succeeded in Two Languages”, Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S34.

<sup>513</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>514</sup> ParticipACTION Campaign Collection, “Print Variety of Ads 1970”, MG 291-2004-41 (1), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

the English characters golf, juggle, mow the lawn, and play tennis, the French campaign featured weightlifting, cross-country skiing, parasailing, and playing baseball.<sup>515</sup> The activities and the accompanying captions were consciously considered and constructed to speak to two audiences that were linguistically and culturally different. This level thoughtfulness embodies Gravel's work. He remained heavily involved with ParticipACTION, serving as a board member from 1973 until its closure. After 1985, the day-to-day responsibility for French-language programming fell to others such as Francois Lagarde. Brought on to ParticipACTION to spearhead the *EXPRES Program (Exercise Prescription Program)* for the Canadian Forces,<sup>516</sup> Lagarde quickly demonstrated that he understood the delicate balancing act of producing truly bicultural advertising content. According to Lagarde,

The golden rule for developing and producing bilingual campaigns is clear and simple. Campaigns need to be thought out in English and in French from the very beginning right through to the end. This means finding relevant research information in the various cultural groups and involving all members of the creative teams every step of the way. The 'big ideas', just like the minor details, need to be double-checked for relevancy in both languages.<sup>517</sup>

One example of Lagarde's work can be drawn from the 1990-1991 print campaign *Make Your Move*. The glossy print advertisements featured the blackened silhouettes of individuals performing various activities. One spot features two female figure skaters, one standing while the other sits on a bench lacing up her skates. The English caption reads,

“You've started skating again?”  
 “Yes, I'm working on a new figure.”<sup>518</sup>

The play on words alludes to both improving a woman's appearance through physical activity and practicing the execution of a skating maneuver. While this message is witty in its own right,

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<sup>515</sup> MG 291-2004-41 (1), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>516</sup> Kisby's Overview, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>517</sup> Francois Lagarde, “The Challenge of Bilingualism: ParticipACTION Campaigns Succeeded in Two Languages”, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 95, Supplement 2, (2004) S31.

<sup>518</sup> MG 291-2004-41 (11), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

the pun employed is a linguistical humour device that did not survive the process of direct translation. Lagarde and his colleagues recognized this shortcoming and produced the following French language caption:

«As tu brisé la glace avec Serge?  
— Non, il n'est pas vite sur ses patins!»<sup>519</sup>

Like the English version, this caption plays with language by employing both figurative and literal meanings of the expression 'breaking the ice'. It also employs the cultural expression *pas vite sur ses patins* to suggest that Serge may not be the most quick-witted of men. This second comment required an intimate knowledge of the French-Canadian language and culture. As Lagarde suggests in his 2004 article for the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, during the 1980s and 1990s, Quebecers became acutely aware of the nuances of marketing and the politically charged nature of public messaging targeting them as consumers. In this atmosphere of hyper-vigilance, many Quebecers easily spotted English content that had been directly translation. By infusing ParticipACTION's messaging with French-Canadian cultural references, Lagarde and his team effectively employed an internal code, telling French-speaking Quebecers that this brand could be trusted as one of their own, not merely an English agency paying lip service to French consumers. With an office located in Montreal, a bilingual name, and a demonstrated commitment to original French-language programming, Quebecers embraced ParticipACTION as a Quebec organization.

This biculturalism afforded ParticipACTION a high degree of brand penetration. According to ParticipACTION's 1994 brand Awareness and Impact Survey, Quebec rated the highest of all provinces in unaided awareness of ParticipACTION, with 31% of those surveyed listing ParticipACTION when asked to name a national organization that promoted physical

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

fitness.<sup>520</sup> When provided with the pinwheel logo, 89% of Quebecers named ParticipACTION without further prompting. But perhaps the most telling statistic of all is that when asked whether or not ParticipACTION's programming was useful, 70% of Quebecers responded in the positive, the highest approval rate in the country.<sup>521</sup>

ParticipACTION's visible commitment to original French-language programming allowed the organization to cultivate a credibility with the people of Quebec unmatched by other federally funded agencies. After nearly twenty years of investment in this relationship, ParticipACTION would be asked to leverage this trust in order to procure much needed national community animation contracts.

### 1988 Olympic Torch Relay

In 1987, ParticipACTION was granted a \$1 500 000 contract with the Government of Canada to promote the Petro-Canada Torch Relay as part of the *Celebrate '88* program and the lead-up to the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games.<sup>522</sup> This contract involved ParticipACTION providing ten community animators whose responsibilities included promoting, advertising, and essentially cheerleading Canadians to become excited about the upcoming international sporting event. These ten employees were "mobilized" in over 1600 communities across Canada to organize events and rallies on the ground to ensure that those carrying the Olympic torch along the trans-Canadian route were always met with enthusiastic community support.<sup>523</sup> While \$1.5 million may seem a small sum to most national corporations, this was the largest one-year contract for ParticipACTION, and the first to break the one-million mark. This was a tremendous

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<sup>520</sup> Gallup National Omnibus, "Awareness and Perceptions of ParticipACTION by Canadians", (June 1992) 9, MG 291-2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>521</sup> Tantramar Survey (1994). MG 291-2004-41 (9), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan. These statistics were also cited by Lagarde in "The Challenge of Bilingualism: ParticipACTION Campaigns Succeeded in Two Languages", *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 95, Supplement 2, (2004) S31.

<sup>522</sup> "Petro-Canada Torch Relay", MG 291-2004-41 (10), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>523</sup> Kisby's Overview, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

infusion of funds for an organization whose annual dedicated operating grant for the 1986-1987 fiscal year was only \$921 000.

Although the fit between *Celebrate '88* and ParticipACTION was not perfect<sup>524</sup>, Russ Kisby easily justified the association since the focus was on promoting sports and organizing community-based events. ParticipACTION was promoting physical fitness through the example set by the Olympic athletes and the 300 torchbearers running along the national route to Calgary.<sup>525</sup> In many ways, although the shift toward community animation as ParticipACTION's main focus was a movement away from direct advertising to the Canadian public, it corresponded with Kisby's expertise in community engagement.

This first foray into the promotion of a national project created by another government agency had widespread exposure in Quebec. The torch relay passed through the densely populated southern corridor of the province with well-publicized stops in Quebec City and Montreal. While Quebec was a part of this national promotional project, the jingoistic implications were never overtly discussed or suggested in ParticipACTION's analysis of the campaign's effectiveness. According to archived reports and memos surrounding this event, the promotion of Canadian patriotism in Quebec does not appear to have been a driving motivation for this event. The relevance of the Olympic Torch Relay was that it was ParticipACTION's first taste of a lucrative government contract that acknowledged the agency's abilities to educate and motivate Canadians at the community level. The success of the Torch Relay granted both ParticipACTION and the Government of Canada the confidence to partner on a future project of much larger scale.

#### CANADA 125: A line in the sand

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<sup>524</sup> Interestingly, it was also a re-connection between ParticipACTION and international sport, though not as the 1969 Senate Task Force would have envisioned it.

<sup>525</sup> Kisby's Overview, MG 291-2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.



In 1991, Russ Kisby was granted a similar contract to “stimulate and promote” the CANADA 125 celebrations in the commemoration of the quasiquicentennary of Canada’s Confederation. As Russ Kisby explains, ParticipACTION was asked to:

... contact national, provincial/territorial and local groups to explain the plans for CANADA 125 celebrations and to encourage their groups/organizations to develop an event or program for community level participation.<sup>526</sup>

ParticipACTION produced resources to aid in this animation and to facilitate events. These resources tackled topics such as *National Neighbourhood Party*, *Experience Canada Tour*, *Road Movies*, *Canadian Heroes*, and *Faces of Canada*.<sup>527</sup> These resource packs included a description of each event, their ideal target audience, how to go about organizing the event, a list of required equipment and resources and promotional boilerplates for use by local organizers. These resources were essentially ‘events-in-a-can’ for ParticipACTION’s local contract employees. ParticipACTION had tremendous financial resources to achieve its objectives, with \$4.5 million provided by the federal government and an additional \$2 million supplied by Imperial Oil (Esso) for one year of work. ParticipACTION recruited, trained, and managed a full-time staff of 50 community animators, drawn mostly from local non-profit organizations from across Canada. With this increased workforce, ParticipACTION recruited over 1100 volunteer event organizers and facilitated over 21 000 “community-based initiatives”.<sup>528</sup>

Clearly, this was a program with a level of funding unmatched before or since in ParticipACTION’s history; yet it was also the most distant from ParticipACTION’s mandate. In lobbying for this contract, Kisby actively cited ParticipACTION’s abilities in social engineering, stating: “ParticipACTION’s goal is to influence and strategically facilitate change in knowledge,

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<sup>526</sup> “CANADA 125”, MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

attitudes and behaviour,”<sup>529</sup> a skill set that appealed to a government that wanted to spur patriotic sentiments. Kisby could not provide statistics that supported ParticipACTION’s success in this arena, but he did emphasize ParticipACTION’s significant political capital in Quebec, a relationship that particularly appealed to federalists concerned with the growing calls for provincial sovereignty. While no documentation exists that clearly outlines ParticipACTION’s co-opting as an agent of federalism in Quebec during the CANADA 125 celebrations, actions taken by individuals within the organization support that analysis, an entirely plausible situation in the lead up to the 1995 Quebec Referendum on Sovereignty.

Of the fifty employees recruited for the CANADA 125 project, thirteen were designated as ‘sub-supervisors’ in the province of Quebec. While all other provinces divided their employees predominantly by territory, Quebec was unique in that four employees were granted cultural, rather than physical, jurisdictions. Edina Bayne, Executive Director of the Black Community Council of Quebec, worked within the African-Canadian community; Leo Housakos, a marketing entrepreneur, targeted Greeks; Alice Keeney-Beaudoin of the Alliance Quebec, represented the Anglophones; and Dr. Giampaolo Sassano spoke to the Italian community.<sup>530</sup> This list is telling as much for its absences as its inclusions. Despite Quebec’s significant First Nations and Inuit communities, no representative was dedicated to their engagement. Also, these cultural representatives were deemed necessary for the province of Quebec but not for other equally culturally diverse regions of the country.

The reasons may lie in tones and hints contained with the campaign material and the employees’ personal reflections on their work. At the end of the program, the Quebec representatives compiled a document best described as a yearbook of their activities. This

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> “CANADA 125”, MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

document includes short biographies of those involved, photos, favourite memories, and memorable quotations from each employee. While pro-Canadian rhetoric is scattered throughout, one comment overtly alludes to CANADA 125's mission in Quebec. In his favourite memory section, Leo Housakos tells the story of Quebec Energy Minister Lise Bacon saying «Vivre le Canada!» as cited at the beginning of this chapter<sup>531</sup> as opposed to «Vivre le Quebec!». After the failure of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, Jacques Parizeau and the Parti Quebecois were gaining support at the expense of Bacon and her provincial Liberal government under the leadership of Robert Bourassa. Bacon's positioning as a dedicated federalist at a CANADA 125 rally and Housakos' obvious enthusiasm for her declaration hints to the political polarization of Quebec in the early 1990s and ParticipACTION's positioning as a French voice advocating for Canadian federalism. While the promotion of Canadian nationalism in Quebec was not the sole purpose of CANADA 125, this was among the program's key objectives. While no archival material overtly points to the reasoning behind the differing jurisdictional allocations in Quebec, I would argue that these communities of recent immigrants, cultural enclaves, and linguistic minorities were strategically targeted as groups more amenable to the promotion of Canadian patriotic ideas, and such was the view of the pro-sovereigntist groups. Only two years after the completion of the CANADA 125 program, then-Premier of Quebec Parizeau would famously blame «l'argent puis des votes ethniques»,<sup>532</sup> for the failure of the 1995 Quebec Referendum on Sovereignty. ParticipACTION's implementation of the CANADA 125 'community activation' in Quebec represented both these causes: it was heavily backed by federal government funds and it actively targeted the so-called 'ethnic vote' that Parizeau derided. ParticipACTION had not only effectively used its cultural cachet with the French speaking people of Quebec, but had also

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<sup>531</sup> "CANADA 125", MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>532</sup> Jacques Parizeau, concession speech at the Convention Centre in Montreal, October 30, 1995. [http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/dossiers/pointderupture/Chapitre\\_9.shtml](http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/dossiers/pointderupture/Chapitre_9.shtml) Accessed Nov. 4, 2014.

strategically targeted the non-French-Canadian population to ensure that all Quebecers were exposed to CANADA 125's pro-Canada agenda.

*Semaine Quebec-Canada en forme*

ParticipACTION's positioning as the public authority on healthy and active living for the federal government was significantly weakened after 1993 with the folding of the *CrownLife Challenge*. Having lost its last major national and annual event that worked to maintain the organization's relationship with Canadian communities, ParticipACTION sought other partnerships that would be able to replicate the funding and success of the *CrownLife Challenge*. It found this in Health Canada, the government ministry that provided ParticipACTION's operational grant. The *CrownLife Challenge* was effectively replaced in 1993 by *Canada's Fitweek*, a week-long blitz of physical fitness events and activities, and which eventually evolved into *SummerActive* that ran from 1995-2000.<sup>533</sup> Health Canada bureaucrats wanted recognition for ParticipACTION's programming, so the ministry engineered an agreement to meet these ends.

The timing of Health Canada's investment in *Canada Fitweek* is telling. 1993, the year the program began, marked significant growth in the Quebec separatist movement both following the defeat of the Charlottetown Accord by national plebiscite in 1992 and leading to the 1993 federal election which saw the Bloc Québécois win 54 seats and become the official opposition. The fact that the Bloc swept nearly every francophone riding in Quebec in 1993 complicates the final analysis of the CANADA 125 project and its secondary objectives. Regardless, *Canada Fitweek* presented an opportunity for the federal government to re-insert itself into the lives of Quebecers through the efforts of ParticipACTION.

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<sup>533</sup> "SummerActive", MG 291-2004-41 (8), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

This program, much like CANADA 125, also had a particular intent within the province of Quebec. From the bilingual archival material provided, it is clear that ParticipACTION's national directors Nanci Colbeck (Toronto) and Marthe Lefebvre (Montreal) were aware of the politically charged atmosphere in Quebec leading up to and during the sovereignty discussions. As a result, they tailored their Quebec content to minimize the overt role of the federal government in its programming.<sup>534</sup> For most Canadians, the week-long initiative was known as *Canada's Fitweek '94*; in Quebec, all promotional material inserted the province's name into the title, reading «Semaine Quebec-Canada en forme '94». The difference in content extended beyond the title. In a mass-letter produced for potential provincial and municipal partners, English sponsors were included in the English letter but were consciously removed from the French-language translation. Interestingly, all French-language material produced for *Canada's Fitweek* exclusively targeted French-speaking Quebecers under the adapted provincial title,<sup>535</sup> a break from the traditional campaigns created under Gravel and Lagarde that acknowledged and included those French-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec.

In 1995, *Fitweek* was rebranded as *SummerActive 1995* with a winter equivalent also introduced. These revised titles avoided issues of overt nationalism, and the ensuing campaigns between 1995 and 2000 were also exceptionally benign in their public impact both inside and outside of Quebec. The materials for these campaigns were once again black-and-white memos and write-ups with limited production value. The French-language material was present but was a direct translation of the English version, thereby losing its cultural nuance. Much as Francois Lagarde has alluded to, this was ParticipACTION in 'survival mode'.<sup>536</sup> These campaigns were

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION's Success", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21.

mere remnants of ParticipACTION's former entertaining, bright, and truly bilingual programming. Again, this post-1995 trend is telling. The defeat of the 1995 Quebec Referendum marked the beginning of a steady decline in popular support for sovereignty, so much so that the federalist Liberal Party received more votes in the following 1998 provincial election (though the Party Québécois won a majority of seats). With Lucien Bouchard choosing not to seek another referendum on sovereignty and the 1999 passage of the federal *Clarity Act* designed to confound future attempts at referenda on the issue, it is understandable that the federal government deprioritized promoting federalism through *SummerActive*. ParticipACTION's utility as a brand of reinforced nationalism was no longer of pressing need in the province of Quebec.

#### Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000

It is unclear whether ParticipACTION's waning commitment to French-language programming had a significant impact on French-speaking Quebec's views regarding the organization since the last independent assessment of Awareness and Impact was completed early in 1994.<sup>537</sup> While Quebecers' reaction cannot be gauged, it is clear from Kisby's campaign for Trans Canada Trail Relay 2000 that even in 1999, he felt comfortable pointing to ParticipACTION's relationship with the people of Quebec as an asset worthy of exploitation. In the Roles and Responsibilities binder produced for the Animation Team of the Trans Canada Trail Relay, an entire section is devoted to "Why ParticipACTION". Among the featured reasons are the following:

Incorporated in 1971 as a national not-for-profit organization. Operates in both official languages from offices in Toronto and Montreal. High awareness and credibility with the Canadian public, governments and the private sector. Strengths include non-political, non-partisan positioning with broad public,

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<sup>537</sup> Based on 1000 = in home interviews with adults, Gallup National Omnibus assessed Canadians awareness of the ParticipACTION brand, message, and campaigns. This survey also assessed internalization of messaging and whether or not individuals believed ParticipACTION was worth funding. *Awareness and Perceptions of ParticipACTION by Canadians*, Gallup National Omnibus, June 1992.

corporate and political acceptance in all regions of Canada (uniquely strong in Quebec).<sup>538</sup>

It is clear that the federal government was willing to exploit the organization's brand awareness in hopes of weakening the sovereignty movement within Quebec. It is also clear that ParticipACTION's leaders, including Russ Kisby, accepted lucrative federal funding for projects, regardless of the fit with the organization's overt mandate. When ParticipACTION's leadership had to choose between compromising the agency's integrity and maintaining the political standing of these powerful institutional gatekeepers, the altruistic intentions of ParticipACTION quickly gave way. Choices made by ParticipACTION organizers and leaders particularly during the heightened period of 1992-1995 demonstrate a willingness to not only accept the mantle of federalism, but act as agents for the federalist cause in Quebec. Agreeing to work on contract to the federal government, for example suggests, that the above stated 'non-political' 'non-partisan' positioning of ParticipACTION could easily be done away with, based on the desires of the highest bidder.

#### ParticipACTION in Quebec: the Height of Marketing Achievement?

Understanding ParticipACTION's place within Quebec, or rather the role of Quebec activities for ParticipACTION, is further complicated when attempting to place which role ParticipACTION was try to fill: social engineer, health promoter, or marketing agent. If one assumes that ParticipACTION was a health promotion agency, as Kisby claimed, then the federal partnerships since 1988 must be framed as corrupting influences, instances where the organization overreached its abilities in order to procure vital funding. It could also be said that these contracts represented the final desperate acts of a ParticipACTION that lost its way and

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<sup>538</sup> "Trans Canada Trail/ Sentier TransCanadien Relay/ Relais 2000, Roles and Responsibilities Animation Team, and Partners" MG 291-2004-41 (10), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

that of a president who wished to hold on to power at all costs. On the other hand, ParticipACTION's choices in Quebec and with the federal government appear entirely logical and consistent if the organization fully embraced a role of private marketing agency, contracted as the most effective purveyor of nationalism in Quebec.

As previously stated, ParticipACTION's ability to speak to Quebecers was fostered through the efforts of early leaders from Quebec including Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, Jacques Gravel, and board members Derek Price and Donald Campbell. Their success at connecting with Quebecers did not come through any experience with health promotion. Rather, all four were either employed by or connected to Quebec media. While they were, in Keith McKerracher's words, peddlers of health, they were trained as advertisers. With their collective expertise, ParticipACTION achieved its potential to become the tremendously successful brand within Quebec.<sup>539</sup>

With this in mind, it is a logical extension of a marketing agency to leverage its brand recognition when bidding on new contracts that are seeking market penetration, as was seen in the actions of ParticipACTION in attempting to retain private sponsors such as CrownLife Insurance. Combined with its decades of experience in community activation, ParticipACTION's bid for the 1988 Olympic Torch Relay seems like a logical extension of its existing work. Again, while this government contract seems an over-extension for a health promotion organization, it seems perfectly suited to a media agency, particularly since ParticipACTION was well positioned to meet the contract requirements set out by the federal government of promotion, organization, and activation. In effect, the 1988 Olympic Torch Relay is the first of several

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<sup>539</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Personal history narrative written by Keith B. McKerracher, September 20, 2013 for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.



government contracts taken on ParticipACTION which positioned the organization as a semi-private contractor rather than a quasi-public federal agency.

Through the lens of ParticipACTION as a media organization, the CANADA 125 contract also appears logical. ParticipACTION added the successful completion of the Torch Relay when applying for an even more lucrative federal contract. Again, ParticipACTION convinced the federal government that it was able to run community activities that garnered popular support in both official languages, and promoted a sanctioned form of patriotism.

ParticipACTION's choice of materials for promotion also aligns with this theory. Looking through the ParticipACTION campaign collection, I noted varying production quality of ParticipACTION advertising materials. The early print campaigns were exceptionally low budget, relying heavily on black-and-white print advertising with little in the way of coloured printing or glossy card stock. In the 1980s, programs such as the *CrownLife Challenge* and *Project APEX* were more professionally produced with blue and red ink complementing the otherwise black and white content. By contrast, the binders, posters, and promotional material for CANADA 125 are glossy, richly coloured, and obviously of higher production value.<sup>540</sup> It is clear that ParticipACTION's spending on advertising materials was in line with the size of the contract, which makes sense for a media organization fulfilling customer expectations, not for a health promotion organization trying to stretch its dollar by reaching the majority of the country. Recall that the wild success of earlier health-promotion campaigns such as PARTICIPaction Saskatoon, the 60-year-old Swede, and even *Body Break* were all achieved *in spite* of the low program budget. The most successful programs relied on low-budget and mainly volunteer efforts but were marked by extremely powerful and well-articulated ideas. The concept of

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<sup>540</sup> "CANADA 125", MG 291-2004-41 (6), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

linking the material (though not content) quality of print materials to the contract size is far more in line with a media agency than a health promotion organization.

CANADA 125 was the organization's most contentious contract. Former employees of ParticipACTION pointed to CANADA 125 as the moment when ParticipACTION "lost its soul".<sup>541</sup> Unlike the Olympic Torch Relay, CANADA 125 could not be spun to fit within ParticipACTION's mandate of physical fitness messaging. It was exclusively a program of patriotic propaganda, and ParticipACTION's value in this project was as a known and trusted Canadian brand. According to Don Bailey, Merle Kisby, and others, Kisby's decision to take on the CANADA 125 contract was met with significant resistance from some ParticipACTION employees including Francois Lagarde who soon thereafter ended his affiliation with the organization.

Employee opposition to CANADA 125, and even Kisby's personal struggle with the contract, demonstrate that ParticipACTION's internal self-constructed identity remained as a health promotion organization. Yet the fact that the CANADA 125 contract seemed an ideal solution to the organization's continued survival, and that it was a logical extension of previous marketing work, demonstrates that the media agency descriptor is far more appropriate by the 1990s. In lobbying for this contract, Kisby actively cited ParticipACTION's abilities in social engineering stating: "ParticipACTION's goal is to influence and strategically facilitate change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour."<sup>542</sup> Tellingly, Kisby cited the agency's "goal", not its actual achievement, and he spoke generally, avoiding any mention of healthism or health promotion. Though ParticipACTION was wildly successful through national campaigns and targeted contracts to brand and craft a dominant perception of acceptable body types and citizenship,

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<sup>541</sup> A ParticipACTION employee who wishes to remain anonymous was interviewed for this study.

<sup>542</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (5), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

there remains little evidence that this strategy achieved lasting lifestyle change amongst participants. Furthermore, this framing of ParticipACTION as an effective agent of civic advocacy<sup>543</sup> demonstrates once again that the thin veneer of health promotion was quickly stripped away when ParticipACTION needed to justify its utility to the federal government.

The Canada's *Fitweek/SummerActive* contract also reveals ParticipACTION's positioning as a marketing organization. *Canada's Fitweek* was in fact organized by Health Canada, while ParticipACTION was relegated to merely "manage and promote" the event.<sup>544</sup> This role was a clear demotion for ParticipACTION as a health promotion organization. With this initiative, Health Canada, the government ministry through which ParticipACTION's operating grant was provided, effectively stated that ParticipACTION was no longer in the business of health promotion program planning. As longtime civil servant and ParticipACTION liaison Peter Lesaux suggests in his oral history for this study, many influential bureaucrats within Health Canada were "jealous"<sup>545</sup> of ParticipACTION's relationship with Canadians and the recognition the organization had received for years using Health Canada funds.<sup>546</sup> Lesaux suggests that there were those in the ranks of Health Canada who felt that all ParticipACTION material should also display the Health Canada logo so that the ministry may receive its due credit for an agency under its funding auspices. This desire to grant credit to Health Canada simply did not correspond with ParticipACTION's original structure as an arms-length agency. By the 1990s, though, the pragmatic reasons for this structural arrangement were long forgotten,

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<sup>543</sup> Paul Rutherford, *The New Icons? The Art of Television Advertising*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 5-6.

<sup>544</sup> Kisby's Overview, "CANADA'S FITWEEK and SUMMERACTIVE", MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>545</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Peter Lesaux, November 20, 2013 10:30 CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

and ParticipACTION was framed by many in government as an ungrateful child unwilling to acknowledge the longtime support of its parent.

This incident is telling for two reasons. First, much like CANADA 125, the *Fitweek/SummerActive* contract clearly demonstrates the erosion of ParticipACTION's dedication to its founding values. Despite *Canada's Fitweek/SummerActive* being a health promotion event, well within ParticipACTION's wheelhouse, the agency did not organize it. Years of work promoting itself as Canada's expert on healthy living was not enough to preserve ParticipACTION's ability to create the programming. Yet Health Canada extended a contract to the organization to manage and promote but not create content, a role far more in line with ParticipACTION's growing status as a media organization. Despite Kisby's efforts ParticipACTION had failed to retain legitimacy as the national authority for healthy living. The 1990s saw many organizations competing for this legitimacy, and Health Canada loomed large over them all, doling out limited funds in small parcels and contract work. Health Canada was still able to overlook jealousy to recognize ParticipACTION's expertise in the realm of media and brand recognition, but content generation and oversight of the project would now remain with Health Canada. ParticipACTION took the contract despite its limited role in health promotion, and despite its awareness being used as a tool to promote federalism in Quebec.

The second telling point is the fact of Health Canada's jealousy. Even though the majority of ParticipACTION's overall funding came from private corporations, provincial and municipal governments, and other federal agencies, Health Canada felt ownership over ParticipACTION because it provided the operating grant. This allegation of jealousy ran parallel to the concurrent conflict between ParticipACTION and *Body Break*. In both cases, the real concern was not about which organization – *Body Break*, ParticipACTION, or Health Canada –

was better positioned to promote healthy living amongst Canadians. Instead, the real concern was over brand awareness and organizational territoriality. Just as Kisby allegedly feared *Body Break* taking too much of the spotlight for health promotion, so too did Health Canada bureaucrats fear that ParticipACTION had been doing so for decades.

The TransCanada Trail contract is, in many ways, fitting as ParticipACTION's final government contract because it best reveals the agency's full transformation from a health promotion organization to a media agency. Much like the Petro Canada Olympic Torch Relay, the promotion of a national trail system could be justified as falling within ParticipACTION's health promotion mandate, but much like the *Canada's Fitweek* contract, ParticipACTION had no input into actual programming. The contract procured in 1999 through the federal government's Millennium Bureau also provided ParticipACTION with its last significant infusion of federal funds – \$5 million – which was particularly important in a year when the organization's dedicated operating grant had plummeted to an anemic \$540 000.<sup>547</sup> Unlike previous government contracts that were framed as partnerships that allowed for the exposure and promotion of ParticipACTION's brand, the Trans Canada Trail program did not afford any such inclusion of the ParticipACTION logo on promotional material. As a result, ParticipACTION was not even allowed the benefit of sustained brand awareness. It had fully become a marketing contractor for the federal government.

### ParticipACTION's Decline

Government contracts in the 1990s were the high water mark for ParticipACTION the media agency, as measured by income level and full realization of media potential. Yet they also marked the beginning of the organization's sudden demise. The slow transformation of ParticipACTION to a media agency dependent on government contracts would undermine its

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<sup>547</sup> Kisby's Overview, MG 291 2004-41, ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

ability to recruit and retain skilled personnel who believed in the organization's founding principles and espoused purpose. Returning to the observations of Bruce Kidd in regards to national athletic associations, the more professionalized a physical activity group becomes the less credibility it holds as an untarnished symbol of nationalism.<sup>548</sup>

One individual in particular exemplifies the hollowing out of ParticipACTION's abilities to act as an effective promoter of healthism. Lagarde's departure presumably over the award of the CANADA 125 contract marked a significant turning point in the quality and tone of ParticipACTION's French language programming. While ParticipACTION continued to produce French content, it lacked the humour, cultural references, and obvious adherence to original content promoted under Gravel's and Lagarde's stewardship. The Campaign Collection contains hundreds of examples of this change to direct translation after Lagarde's departure. One example, pulled from the "1996-2000 Sharing A Healthier Future Print" campaign, is representative of the majority. The English ad reads, "Q: Why did the chicken cross the road? A: To live longer." the French ad also reads, «Q: Pourquoi la poule a-t-elle traversé la route? — R: Pour vivre plus longtemps.»<sup>549</sup> This ad does not capture the playful linguistic humour or witty tone of the earlier campaigns and provides no appreciation that effective advertising and humour must be culturally situated. While previous ads contained cartoons by artist Michael Fog or photos of everyday Canadians participating in physical activity, this campaign is heavily text-based, with few images and no colour mock-ups. The shortcomings of this campaign – its lack of visual interest, humour, and cultural pull – are all a result of ParticipACTION's weakened financial situation during the 1990s.

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<sup>548</sup> Bruce Kidd, *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists and Socialists: Shaping Canadian Sport in the 1920s and 1930s*, (PhD diss., York University, 1990) 4.

<sup>549</sup> MG 291 2004-41 (1), ParticipACTION Archives, University of Saskatchewan.

ParticipACTION's commitment to original French-language content was among many casualties of the organization's ongoing struggle to survive. The gradual decline of community-based initiatives receiving local support and corporate-sponsored projects receiving private funding gradually isolated ParticipACTION from that which made the organization initially so successful and dynamic. With limited financial resources, Kisby's attention had to be focused on finding other revenue streams, namely in federal government contracts. While lucrative, these were temporary and lacked the ability to reconnect with grassroots communities. In effect, by the early 1990s, ParticipACTION only cashed in on its market penetration and brand awareness to open new revenue streams. Yet by commodifying its own brand, ParticipACTION also allowed its name to decline. In this milieu of key staff departing, funds to dedicated ParticipACTION campaigns shrinking, and Russ Kisby expending increasing time and energy lobbying the federal government for funds rather than focusing needed resources on continued program innovation, ParticipACTION's famous national programming simply limped along, void of the humour and creativity it once possessed that built its initial connection with Canadians.

### Conclusion

It is unclear whether Kisby recognized the changing reality of ParticipACTION, as he continued to promote the *SummerActive* campaigns and diligently pursued government community animation contracts. As Peter Lesaux has suggested, Health Canada and Active Living proved to be two federal bodies that did not appreciate having to share federal funds with ParticipACTION. In fact, Health Canada's strategy of minimizing ParticipACTION's visible role in contracts like *Canada's Fitweek* served this end by undercutting any leverage the organization may have had to seek further funding.

With competing federal agencies lobbying for shrinking funds available for physical fitness and health promotion, Kisby shrewdly assessed his assets in the political reality of the day and played on ParticipACTION's unique relationship with the people of Quebec as a trump card not possessed by competitors. After 1995 and the failure of the Quebec referendum on sovereignty, the value of this relationship was simply not enough to stave off those within Health Canada who did not understand what ParticipACTION was and why it had been created in the first place. Slowly forced to survive on government contracts that did not provide the resources for independent programs or campaign innovation, ParticipACTION had its heart gradually stripped away. ParticipACTION's French-language programming is a microcosm of this decline. Smart, playful, and innovative during the 1970s and 1980s, the decision to embrace lucrative government contracts that strayed from ParticipACTION's mandate compromised its ability to communicate to the French-speaking population of Canada. After 1991, while French-language programming continued, it was hollow, bland, and directly translated from the original English. It was a shadow of its former self, much like ParticipACTION.

It is ironic, then, that ParticipACTION's era of lucrative government contracts ushered the demise of the organization. While Merle Kisby states her husband recognized the desperation of the situation and the role of these contracts in keeping the doors open, taking them on in fact undermined the ability of the organization to justify its continued existence.<sup>550</sup> The full transition of ParticipACTION to a media agency meant that it accessed lucrative government contracts but at the cost of all the other inputs – humorous and memorable content, grassroots volunteer support, and corporate donations – that made ParticipACTION a successful brand in the first place. And by behaving as the quasi-private media organization contracted to the federal

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<sup>550</sup> Victoria Lamb Drover, Oral Interview with Merle Kisby, October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST for *ParticipACTION: A Legacy In Motion*.



government, it allowed other federal agencies and ministries to further minimize, then eliminate, ParticipACTION's brand presence in projects. Kisby had little remaining leverage against the final cuts that left ParticipACTION unable to meet its basic operating costs. In those final days, Kisby had spent his two most precious resources: regional credibility in Quebec and arms-length creative civic advocacy. With these trump cards played, Kisby was left with an empty hand and a government no longer willing to sit at the table.

ParticipACTION: A Legacy in Motion  
Victoria Lamb Drover

Conclusion

Sports have long attracted the attention of the Canadian state. In the nineteenth century, governors general patronized and legislators regulated them, even prohibiting activities such as prize fighting. Today, governments invest in them. The federal government, through the Fitness and Amateur Sports Act of 1961, directs, finances, and controls Canadians' preparation and participation...largely in the interests of reinforcing and publicizing Canadian identity and 'the ideology of excellence'.<sup>551</sup>

Using the written records contained in the ParticipACTION Archives, the collected oral histories of ParticipACTION stakeholders, and the existing academic writing regarding Canadian media studies, obesity studies, sports studies, and the rise of the expert in the post-war period, this dissertation has explored ParticipACTION's position as a national authority on physical fitness and healthy lifestyle. The agency used this authority to promote a particular form of embodied nationalism.<sup>552</sup> As one of the longest running health promotion agency in the world, ParticipACTION was ideally positioned to use its brand awareness to prescribe a lifestyle and nationalism to the people of Canada.<sup>553</sup> In order to grasp a clearer picture of the whole, the previous chapters have delved into the changing motivations behind ParticipACTION's founding and continuation, as well as an examination of the benevolent gatekeepers who propelled and directed its evolution with their personal agendas, professional interests, and management styles.<sup>554</sup> These investigations have attempted to clarify and define what kind of memory ParticipACTION has established with the Canadian population and how the potential influence of this programming is complicated by language, region, age, body type, and ethnicity.

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<sup>551</sup> Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 5.

<sup>552</sup> Adrian Bauman, Judith Madill, Cora Lynn Craig, Art Salmon, "ParticipACTION: This Mouse Roared, But Did It Get the Cheese?" Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S19.

<sup>553</sup> Bauman, S19.

<sup>554</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006) xii.

### Plus ça change: Motivations and Justifications

The confluence of Cold War anxiety with Canada's poor international sports performance provided the initial political thrust for ParticipACTION's founding. A group of politically influential media elites collaborated with the federal government to create a national agency that purported to address this pressing concern. Using persuasive marketing techniques, these political actors used this platform for personal elevation and professional legitimization as institutional gatekeepers of acceptable citizenship as performed on the body.<sup>555</sup>

The political justification for ParticipACTION's funding was always based on exploiting anxiety.<sup>556</sup> As Paul Rutherford and Brian Massumi have discussed, health advocates often choose to employ ambient fear to create a docile public susceptible to prescriptive messaging.<sup>557</sup> The early 1980s marked a transition in ParticipACTION's political justification due to the waning currency of Cold War anxiety and the concurrent change in ParticipACTION's leadership. Russ Kisby's personal struggle with weight led to the removal of the negative depiction of fat from ParticipACTION's advertisements because high-pressure and binary marketing tactics did not conform with Kisby's vision of ParticipACTION as an upbeat, positive, and fun marketing brand. This decision, although based in positive motivations, resulted in the marginalization and vilification of Canada's fat population as the new enemy. The silencing and omission of these individuals from ParticipACTION's promotional material only worked to position them as society's most pressing health threat.

While all ParticipACTION advertising utilized the body as site of patriotic performance, Kisby overtly emphasized patriotism and nation-building rhetoric throughout his administration

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<sup>555</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006) xii.

<sup>556</sup> Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 15.

<sup>557</sup> Brian Massumi, *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), viii.

in an attempt to market physical activity with an exclusively positive tone. Kisby, for all his good intentions, ignored the basic principles of effective marketing. His tactics proved unsuccessful and, by 1991 with increasing competition within the health promotion industry, Kisby joined the chorus of health advocates citing the ‘obesity crisis’ as the paramount and indisputable justification for ParticipACTION’s continued existence.

While the Cold War and the obesity crisis were the most sustained ‘threats’, the rise of the sovereignty movement in Quebec offered ParticipACTION another moral panic to exploit. Between 1991 and its closure in 1999, Kisby often cited ParticipACTION’s well-established brand trust with the people of Quebec in the procurement of federal contracts to keep the agency alive. These contracts were for nation-building projects that played on the national anxiety that Quebec might leave Confederation. After 1978, while ParticipACTION’s programming outwardly remained upbeat, positive, and fun, the underlying message and justification for ParticipACTION remained the same: buy into our brand and idea of physical fitness or let down the nation. Over the course of thirty years, while the constructed menace changed, the underlying ultimatum remained the same. The individual citizen was repeatedly instructed to adhere to ParticipACTION’s narrow definition of health or face the social consequences.

#### From Health Promotion Advocates to Marketing Agency

Much like the motivations for ParticipACTION’s programming, the basic nature of the agency changed dramatically over time. Established by business elites and initially run by a self-proclaimed marketing guru, ParticipACTION’s name, business model, and basic structure were entrenched by Keith McKerracher prior to his departure in 1978. As an agency specifically removed from traditional government structures and with no dedicated funding McKerracher and the board had to think creatively in order to nationally disseminate their idea. Using the

PARTICIPAction Saskatoon Pilot Project as a test ground, and by employing business practices such as attractive sales reps and easy product use, McKerracher was able to ensure the federal government's small investment provided ample return in donated media exposure. This system only worked so long as station managers, newspaper editors, and disc jockeys maintained programming control and were sold on ParticipACTION's advertising and personnel. While McKerracher's messages were brash, sarcastic, and, at times, risqué, they did keep these important stakeholders engaged and supportive. These marketing maneuvers angered the health promotion community because messages such as the 60-year-old Swede were inaccurate and undermined collective efforts to legitimize their "helping profession".<sup>558</sup> Regardless of these concerns, McKerracher understood the first rule of marketing: know your audience. As Peggy Edwards and Irving Rootman suggest, the media and not the public were ParticipACTION's primary audience. In order to reach its end goals of mass behaviour modification, ParticipACTION had to impress the media industry with its innovative and attractive advertising.<sup>559</sup> While the physical fitness community was much happier with ParticipACTION under Kisby's leadership, the agency's ability to generate media donations continually declined under his tenure. Media support did not come from the happiness of health promotion advocates; in other words, preaching to the choir did little to fill the pews or the coffers. This being said, the slow decline of ParticipACTION's influence in the Canadian media market cannot be attributed to Kisby's shortcomings alone.

The consolidation, centralization, and drastic expansion of the Canadian mass media during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the federal government's transition to term contracts

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<sup>558</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 64.

<sup>559</sup> Irving Rootman & Peggy Edwards, "The Best Laid Schemes of Mice and Men...ParticipACTION's Legacy and the Future of Physical Activity Promotion in Canada", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S38.

rather than dedicated funding weakened ParticipACTION's abilities as a health promotion agency. As seen in the PARTICIPaction Saskatoon case study, the city's media in 1972 was almost exclusively run by local or family-owned companies. That structure granted tremendous programming control to their local managers. Within a decade, though, all were in the hands of large conglomerates with programming control centralized at national head offices. This tightening of ranks made it more difficult for ParticipACTION to penetrate smaller media markets. In these changing circumstances, Kisby played on ParticipACTION's past success as an effective creator of advertising campaigns to slowly reshape the organization into something akin to a marketing agency for hire. This new identity allowed ParticipACTION to survive but also undermined its credibility and divided its attentions. Based on media exposure ratios, public awareness polls, and oral history interviews, ParticipACTION was more successful as a health promotion agency run by a media mogul (Keith McKerracher) than as a marketing agency run by a health promotion advocate (Russ Kisby). As he boasted in his interview with Richard Baka, McKerracher was a "peddler" who knew how to persuade a nation to buy a product. Kisby, for all his fervent passion and fitness knowledge, did not know how to effectively sell Canadians on long-term lifestyle changes. In the end, peddling proved more publically persuasive than personal passion in purveying the idea of building a fit nation.

This disconnect and misunderstanding of what ParticipACTION was and what it was trying to accomplish helps to explain why many Canadians marginalized by location, race, body type, and socio-economic status simply were not exposed to nor believed in ParticipACTION's agenda of behaviour modification. As the Historical GIS analysis of the Clipping Collection indicate and the oral history of Catherine Fauquier corroborate, communities that did not encounter national ParticipACTION campaigns in their local newspapers rarely if ever

experienced locally generated events. These Canadians only experienced ParticipACTION as a national brand on their television screens and were less likely to develop a personal connection to ParticipACTION's physical fitness message.<sup>560</sup> This failure to understand the importance of local programming resulted in the marginalizing of communities and individuals, many of whom already were disadvantaged by the social determinants of health.<sup>561</sup>

### Competing Visions and Approaches

ParticipACTION and its effectiveness as a healthism project was drastically affected by the decision to replace Keith McKerracher with Russ Kisby in 1978. McKerracher was remembered as a brash and difficult man but a brilliant marketer nonetheless. He understood that to sell a lifestyle required a huge jolt to rouse Canadians out of their lethargy. He engaged their sense of nation and patriotism through his use of binary marketing, shock advertising, and edgy humour. In short, he captivated the Canadian public. By contrast, Kisby's skill set was different. He was a charismatic figure who understood government and whole-heartedly believed in ParticipACTION's mandate, but Kisby did not possess the business acumen and marketing savvy to indefinitely sustain the agency. Kisby, with his post-graduate training in community outreach, strove for professionalization in ParticipACTION's administration as a health promotion agency.<sup>562</sup> He did not understand that by attempting to become more academic and theoretical in health promotion programming he was inadvertently eroding ParticipACTION's grassroots legitimacy with the Canadian public and placing ParticipACTION in direct competition with several other professional health promotion organizations which began

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<sup>560</sup> John C. Spence, Lawrence R. Brawley, Cora Lynn Craig, Ronald C. Plotnikoff, Mark S. Tremblay, Adrian Bauman, Guy Faulkner, Karen Chad, and Marianne I. Clark, "ParticipACTION: Awareness of the ParticipACTION campaign among Canadian adults – Examining the knowledge gap hypothesis and a hierarchy-of-effects model, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 6:85 (2009).

<sup>561</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION's Success", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21.

<sup>562</sup> Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2006) 64

operating in the 1990.<sup>563</sup> While Kisby produced lecture series, pamphlets, and unsuccessful clothing lines, the most popular and well-known campaign during his tenure, *Body Break*, was generated out of house. Its success with the Canadian public not only caught Kisby completely off guard but threatened that which he held most dear: his vision of ParticipACTION and its preeminent position as Canada's physical fitness advocate. Despite retaining McKerracher's business model, Kisby was unsuccessful in sustaining a corporate marketing agency because he did not understand or appreciate its foundational elements. This was particularly troublesome for ParticipACTION during the 1980s and 1990s when the Canadian media was undergoing a process of demassification<sup>564</sup> at the same time that the political underpinning of health promotion was being eroded.

Russ Kisby's decision to take on the CANADA 125 contract in 1991 set ParticipACTION on a road to decline. While ParticipACTION was experimenting with government contracts loosely associated with physical fitness as early as 1988, the Olympic Torch Relay could be justified as being relevant to ParticipACTION's mandate. CANADA 125 could not. The decision to accept this, the most lucrative public or private contract in ParticipACTION's history, has been equated to the agency selling its soul. In desperate need of funds, Kisby undercut ParticipACTION's primary fitness motivations. After CANADA 125, ParticipACTION's fate was unavoidable. The precedent had been set, and the federal government would continue to offer ParticipACTION substantial financial support but only through term contracts while the

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<sup>563</sup> Bruce Kidd, *Improvers, Feminists, Capitalists and Socialists: Shaping Canadian Sport in the 1920s and 1930s*, (PhD diss., York University, 1990) 4.

<sup>564</sup> Francois Lagarde, "The Mouse Under the Microscope: keys to ParticipACTION's Success", Supplement 2, *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 95, (2004) S21. Lagarde suggested that demassification is the dismantling of the collective cultural experience as media options expand and specialize.



operating grant that assured its autonomy and integrity was starved out of existence as the agency was “allowed to sunset”<sup>565</sup>.

### Brand, Message, and Buy-In

During the 1990s when Kisby turned to national government contracts to keep ParticipACTION afloat, the agency exited the business of selling the idea of physical fitness. Instead, ParticipACTION was in the business of selling its own ParticipACTION brand of embodied nationalism. In order to understand the agency’s successes and failures, the division must be recognized between its brand and message. This division has been recognized by Jackson and Rootman & Edwards, but the relationship until now has not been analyzed through the lens of long-term influence on Canadian perceptions of health and citizenship.<sup>566</sup> This dissertation has demonstrated that while the national campaigns sold the brand, local initiatives worked to inculcate the message, even if it offered only short-term returns such as in the Saskatoon Pilot Project. This separation between brand and message works to explain the two levels of memory held by many Canadians and why the dominant social memory and private social memories are often at odds. Almost all Canadians, regardless of age, language, or region, know of ParticipACTION through its national television campaigns such as *Vitality*, *Body Break*, and *Don’t Just Think About It, Do it!*, they told Canadians what ParticipACTION was and packaged its brand in catchy slogans, upbeat music, and smiling faces.

### Conclusion

Both in McKerracher’s and Kisby’s administrations, these campaigns reinforced Canadian’s relationship with the ParticipACTION brand and its particular healthism project. But what McKerracher failed to recognize and what Kisby was unable to accomplish was to translate

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<sup>565</sup> Michel O’Neill, Ann Pederson, Sophie Dupéré, Irving Rootman, *Health Promotion in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Canadian Scholars Press Inc., 2007) 95.

<sup>566</sup> Jackson, (1975) ix. Rootman & Edwards, S38.

the idea into physical action, shifting from Stage 1 (educate and motivate) to Stage 2 (mobilize). Telling people what a healthy and happy Canadian looked like was much easier than persuading them to get off the couch to engage in regular physical activity. ParticipACTION's success in message buy-in most likely resulted from locally produced and reinforced programming such as Dave Greber's series in Medicine Hat or the Saskatoon vs. Umea Challenge. The very personal peer pressure to conform produced resistance in a way that the passive consumption of ParticipACTION's nationalism did not. As the Phase 2 (Participant) interviews indicate, while all believed in ParticipACTION and pointed to the obesity crisis as clear evidence of its continued utility in Canadian society, none admitted that its programming had changed their own lifestyle choices. This resistance, whether passively subsumed or actively considered, has produced the resulting duality of memory surrounding ParticipACTION and works to explain why the agency was unable to produce the large-scale behaviour modification its founders desired. This healthism project born out of the Cold War and fueled by the obesity crisis failed to generate the desired physical adherence but did have a lasting impact on how Canadian's view physical fitness and the body politic. As an agency of prescribed embodied citizenship, ParticipACTION was exceptionally successful. Canadians may not practice ParticipACTION's definition of a 'healthy lifestyle' but they do know what it looks like and that as 'good Canadians' they should want to achieve it.

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### **c) Oral Interviews**

Oral Interviews collected in with Behavioural Research Ethics Approval from the University of Saskatchewan

<b>Name</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Date</b>
Dr. Don Bailey	1	M	September 17, 2012 11:30 a.m. CST
Barbara Hodges	1	F	October 2, 2012 9:00 a.m. CST
Richard Baka	1	M	October 17, 2014 4:00 p.m. CST
Dominic DeFelice	2	M	September 30, 2013 11:30 a.m. EST
Roger Duval	1	M	September 25, 2012 2:30 p.m. EST
Catherine Fauquier	1	F	September 23, 2013 11:30 a.m. EST
Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien II	1	M	November 13, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST
Dr. Norm Gionet	1	M	October 1, 2012 1:30 p.m. CST
Henrietta Goplen	1	F	September 21, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST
Hal Johnson	1	M	August 3, 2012 10:30 a.m. CST
Gail Jones	1	F	September 13, 2012 12:00 p.m. CST
Merle Kisby	1	F	October 9, 2013 11:00 a.m. CST
Marilyn Knox	1	F	December 10, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST
Jack Langille	2	M	September 10, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST
Peter Lesaux	1	M	November 20, 2013 10:30 a.m. CST
Tom McClocklin	1	M	September 18, 2012 10:00 a.m. CST
Keith McKerracher	1	M	September 20, 2013 (Written Submission)

Dr. and Mrs Howard Nixon	1	M/F	September 21, 2012 1:00 p.m. CST
Dennis Smith	2	F	September 10, 2012 2:00 p.m. CST
Jim Struthers	1	M	September 11, 2012 4:30 p.m. CST
Dale Zakreski	2	M	October 2, 2012 2:00 p.m. CST
Anonymous	1	F	October 18, 2013 3:00 p.m. EST

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**Appendix 1 – Behavioural Research Ethics**  
**Phase I: ParticipACTION Employees, Board Members and Volunteers**  
**Interview Questions**

**Phase I: These questions are designed for living national directors, presidents, and employees of ParticipACTION, as well as government officials who were intimately involved in ParticipACTION campaigns and funding. After thanking them for their participation and going through the consent form, I will begin by showing the participant some of the archival records that indicate their involvement. These can include ribbon cutting photos, news releases, and magazine interviews. I want the participant to think about their involvement with the organization and understand that I have done the research necessary to ask them intelligent questions about their experiences.**

- 1) When you think of ParticipACTION what first springs to mind?
- 2) What years to you remember being involved with this organization and in what capacity?
- 3) What were your responsibilities? Were you a paid employee or volunteer?
- 4) As a corporate community how did you feel about the internal culture within the organization? Was it a positive or negative place to work?
- 5) Did any individuals in particular add to your positive or negative experience of your employment there?
- 6) Which office were you based in? (Toronto, Montreal, or a regional office)
- 7) Can you walk me through the process by which you became involved in ParticipACTION. How long did this association last? Why did it end?
- 8) In working for this organization, do you have a sense of how much energy was devoted to promoting physical fitness and how much was devoted to finding contracts and funding to keep the organization a float.
- 9) Do you feel the relationship between these two necessary aspects of the organization shifted over time? What factors were at play?
- 10) As an employee did you feel your job was rewarding, that your input was valued, and that your future within the organization was secure? Why or why not?
- 11) At the time of your involvement did you believe that ParticipACTION had the ability to fulfill its mission statement of promoting healthy living and physical activities for all Canadians?
- 12) Do you believe ParticipACTION fulfilled this goal? What impact do you feel ParticipACTION has had on the health of Canadians?
- 13) When you think of your time with ParticipACTION, what memories (fond or difficult) really come to the fore? Why do you think these events or people stand out?

14) Which campaigns/ events do you feel demonstrate the best of ParticipACTION's work? Can you explain why?

15) Which campaigns/ events do you feel turned out to be the biggest failures for ParticipACTION? Can you explain why?

16) Is there any of your own work that you are particularly proud of?

17) Do you feel that ParticipACTION was successful in targeting all Canadians? Do you remember any campaigns or strategies employed to reach out to marginalized groups?

18) During the 1970s and 1980s, ParticipACTION was a world leading organization in health promotion, why do you think it held this place in the international public health community? When do you feel this predominance began to wane and why?

19) During the 1990s, ParticipACTION began to move away from general messages of health living to discuss the root causes of sedentary lifestyle such as poverty, poor housing, and under-employment. How do you feel this shift effected the organization, its branding with Canadians, and its status with both corporate sponsors and governmental funding bodies?

20) ParticipACTION was an organization that incorporated local volunteers, municipal leaders, regional staff, two head offices (one for each official language) and a national board. What were the advantages and disadvantages of so many people being involved in information dissemination?

21) Looking at those who participated in the various levels of the organization, it appears that those in positions of authority tended to be men, while the ranks of the staff and volunteers on the ground tended to be women. Can you speak to this perceived gendering of roles?

22) With resources, both human and financial always scarce, what role did 'burn out' play in the organizations perceived slowing in the 1990s? Were the key players involved simply out of energy?

23) During the 1990s, ParticipACTION took on several government contracts (with DND, CANADA 125, Trans Canada Trail 2000) how essential did these contracts become to the organizations funding and continuation? At times these contracts had little to do with the organization's original mandate (CANADA 125 in particular), how was this work justified to those involved?

26) As an organization that was funded by both public and private interests, ParticipACTION could have been seen as particularly vulnerable to political interference in its programming. How much external political pressure was exerted on the organization? Did this stifle the marketing organization's creativity in any way?

25) In the archived public releases about ParticipACTION, it is first framed as a non-for-profit 'organization', but during the 1990s, its advertising material describes it as a 'company'. Do you see a difference between these two designations? When to you feel this shift occurred and why was it necessary?

26) When it was first launched nationally during the 1970s, ParticipACTION was known for its upbeat and humorous advertisements. Do you feel this was a key component to why Canadians became so engaged with these media offerings?

27) Can you think of a ParticipACTION ad that is your particular favourite?

28) How do you feel the tone of ParticipACTION advertisements changed over its thirty-year history? What factors drove these changes?

29) When ParticipACTION was founded, those involved were acutely aware of the need to create bilingual content. Can you speak to this dedication to bilingualism both in staffing and products? Was this commitment strengthened or weakened by political events such as the 1980 and 1995 Quebec Referendums?

30) Some media commentators have suggested that ParticipACTION and its administrators could not adapt to the burgeoning Internet age of the early 2000s. How do you respond to this comment?

30) Why do you feel ParticipACTION closed its doors in 2001?

31) What role did the federal government play in this closure?

32) What was the sentiment surrounding the closure?

31) What do you feel is ParticipACTION's greatest legacy?

32) Would you mind answering a few demographic questions? There are only six and if you feel uncomfortable answering any of them, please feel free to simply say 'pass'.

a) What is your gender? (I am not specifying man or woman because I do not want to set barriers on people's interpretation of this category)

b) At the time you began your affiliation with ParticipACTION were you between the ages of  
0-12 \_\_\_\_\_ 12-18 \_\_\_\_\_ 18-24 \_\_\_\_\_ 25-30 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-45 \_\_\_\_\_ 45-60 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-Plus \_\_\_\_\_

c) At the time you began your affiliation with ParticipACTION, were you  
married \_\_\_\_\_ widowed, divorced, separated \_\_\_\_\_ single \_\_\_\_\_

d) Did you have children at the time?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

e) What ethnicity do you feel best describes you? (I will leave this an open non-multiple choice question, as offering options would only be limiting to their interpretation of their own ethnic and cultural background)

f) At the time you began your affiliation with ParticipACTION, what was your highest level of education?  
Elementary School \_\_\_\_\_ High School \_\_\_\_\_ College/ Trade School \_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate/ University\_\_\_\_\_

Graduate/University\_\_\_\_\_

33) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself that you feel would be important to your involvement with ParticipACTION?

34) Is there anything else you would like to add?

**I will then thank the participant for their involvement and ask them if they have any questions of me.**

## **Phase II: Achievement Week Winners**

### **Interview Questions**

**Phase II: Achievement Week Winners (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, March 1 to March 25 1974). After introductions and discussion of the consent form, I will begin by showing the participant the full-page newspaper article about their participation. This will both put the candidate at ease and help them remember the event and period of interest.**

- 1) What do you think about when you see this news clipping?
- 2) Did you remember this event when I first contacted you?
- 3) Did you enjoy or not enjoy being involved in this physical fitness challenge?
- 4) Do you remember what prize you received? (Participants received hats, shoelaces, t-shirts etc. No monetary prizes were given out)
- 5) Any idea what happened to that prize? Did you place a lot of value in it at the time? Was it something cool to have? Was it a reason to participate or just a neat bonus to living your already physically fit life?
- 6) Do you remember why you chose to participate in the Physical Achievement Week Challenge?
- 7) Was the participation of other people you knew an important part of your reasons for participating? If so, how did you know these other participants? (Work, family, church, community organization, sports team)
- 8) Were you someone who was particularly physically active before getting involved with ParticipACTION?
- 9) Did the ParticipACTION challenge make a difference in your level of physical activity and frequency of exercise?
- 10) Do you feel that your involvement in a ParticipACTION event changed how you view physical activity and its importance in your life?
- 11) Was your overall participation in this event a positive or negative experience?
- 12) Do you have any recollections about ParticipACTION's presence in the wider community?
- 13) When you think of 'ParticipACTION' what first springs to mind?
- 14) If you remember some of the ParticipACTION media campaigns, which ones really stick with you? (Print, Radio, TV). Why do you think that is?
- 15) In your opinion was it an effective organization at the time?
- 16) Do you feel it was an effective use of taxpayer dollars? Why or why not?

17) Have your feelings changed now? Do you feel its effectiveness and presence in Canadian society has increased or decreased since your experience in the 1970s?

18) Do you feel that all races, classes, and both men and women participated in this event equally? Do you have a sense of which communities really grabbed on to this idea and participated in greater numbers?

19) Would you mind answering a few demographic questions? There are only six and if you feel uncomfortable answering any of them, please feel free to simply say 'pass'.

a) What is your gender? (I am not specifying man or woman because I do not want to set barriers on peoples interpretation of this category)

b) At the time of your participation in 1974, were you between the ages of  
0-12 \_\_\_\_\_ 12-18 \_\_\_\_\_ 18-24 \_\_\_\_\_ 25-30 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-45 \_\_\_\_\_ 45-60 \_\_\_\_\_  
60-Plus \_\_\_\_\_

c) At the time of your participation in 1974, were you  
married \_\_\_\_\_ widowed, divorces, separated \_\_\_\_\_ single \_\_\_\_\_

d) Did you have children at the time?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (If yes, did they participate YES, NO) No \_\_\_\_\_

e) What ethnicity do you feel best describes you? (I will leave this an open non-multiple choice question, as offering options would only be limiting to their interpretation of their own ethnic and cultural background)

f) At the time of your participation in 1974, what was your highest level of education?  
Elementary School \_\_\_\_\_ High School \_\_\_\_\_ College/ Trade School \_\_\_\_\_  
Undergraduate/ University \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate/University \_\_\_\_\_

20) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself that you feel would be important to this study?

21) Is there anything else you would like to add?

**I will then thank the participant for their involvement and ask them if they have any questions of me.**



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September 7, 2012

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To Allan Francois,

My name is Victoria Lamb Drover, and I am a PhD. student in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan. My research is being supervised by Dr. Valerie Korinek. Her contact information is also listed above. I am currently researching and writing a social history of ParticipACTION. As part of this study, I am interviewing people who were "Achievement Week Winners" during the 1974 "Get Moving" campaign. Your name or the name of one of your family members was listed among the winners, and I would very much appreciate the opportunity to talk to you briefly about your experience with ParticipACTION. The interview can be done in person or over the phone and should take between 15-30 minutes, depending on how much you remember and wish to share.

Your interview will be recorded and the information will only be used in my research study, and will eventually be archived in the University Archives along with the complete ParticipACTION papers. Your experiences with ParticipACTION are important, and I would very much appreciate your involvement in this study.

If you would like more information or are interesting in being a participant, please feel free to contact me by phone at 306-948-5289 or by email at victoria.lambdrover@usask.ca.

Thank you for your consideration and help with my research,

Vickie Lamb Drover  
B.A., M.A., PhD. (ABD)